The Leopard, the Leper and the Lecher:

The Code of the Spotted in Colonial Discourse, c. 1550-1625

Thesis
presented to the Faculty of Arts
of
the University of Zurich
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Tattooed natives of Florida by Jacques Le Moyne (c.1580) (Hulton 1984:Plates 61-62)

by
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spotted, adj.

1a. Marked or decorated with spots.
2a. Disfigured or stained with spots.
b. fig. Morally stained or blemished.

(Oxford English Dictionary)

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List of Abbreviations

General Reference Works

EETS = Early English Text Society
MED = *Middle English Dictionary*. Eds. Kurath, Hans et. al. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1954-99.
OED = *Oxford English Dictionary online* (2nd ed., enlarged). Oxford: OUP, 2003. (http//:dictionary.oed.com)
STC = Pollard, A. W. and G.R. Redgrave. *Short Title Catalogue of Books 1475-1640*. 3 vols. London: The Bibliographical Society, 1986-91.
Wing = Wing, Donald. *Short-Title Catalogue of Books 1641-1700*. 3 vols. New York: MLA, 1972.

Shakespearean Works

ADO = Much Ado About Nothing
ANT = Antony and Cleopatra
CYM = Cymbeline
1H4 = The First Part of King Henry the Fourth
2H4 = The Second Part of King Henry the Fourth
H5 = King Henry the Fifth
HAM = Hamlet
LR = King Lear
MND = A Midsummer Night's Dream
MV = The Merchant of Venice
OTH = Othello
ROM = Romeo and Juliet
R2 = King Richard the Second
TGV = Two Gentlemen of Verona
TIT = Titus Andronicus
TMP = The Tempest
TN = Twelfth Night
TRO = Troilus and Cressida
WIV = The Merry Wives of Windsor
WT = The Winter's Tale

Unless further specified, reference is made to the *Norton Shakespeare* (Greenblatt et al. 1997), which reproduces the text of the Oxford edition.

Bible translations

Authorised Version = The holy bible (London 1611) [STC 2216]
Bishop's Bible = The holie bible (R. Jugge 1574) [STC 2105]
Douai Bible = The holie bible … out of authentical Latin (Douai 1609) [STC 2207]
Geneva Bible = The bible and holy scriptures (Geneva 1562) [STC 2095]
Vulgate = Nova Vulgata Bibliorum Sacrorum. Vatican: Liberia Editrice, 1979.
Wycliffite Bible = Purvey's (c.1395) version of Wyclif's translation. Eds. Forshall, Josiah and Frederic Madden. Oxford: OUP, 1850.

Unless further specified, reference is made to the *Authorised Version*.

Typeface in Quotes from Medieval and Early Modern Texts

With quotes from medieval and early modern texts, the typeface has been modernised where it does not result in any substantial change of meaning. Hence, the Old English letters 'eth' (ð) and 'thorn' (þ) are reproduced as *th*, the Old English aspirate 'yogh' is spelled *g*, and the Latinate *u* for the phoneme /v/ is spelled *v* throughout. Apart from these changes, the original spelling as such has been preserved.

Abstract (English version)

This transdisciplinary study historicises a symbolic code which early modern colonial discourse regularly invokes in order to redefine non-Europeans as corrupted and fallen creatures. Drawing from a wide range of textual and iconographic sources, the study documents how images of spottedness are instrumentalised to vilify unfamliar physiognomies and skin colour as symptoms of bestiality, of disease, and of unbridled lust. Whereas numerous Renaissance texts exploit this code of the spotted to popularise vaguely-defined concepts of ethnic segregation, some contemporary works of great insight echo this discourse not in order to subscribe to its rationale, but to question its underlying notions. Having sketched out the multiple meanings attached to three archetypes of the spotted (the beast, the diseased body, and the lecher), the study proceeds to close-read this symbolism within three Shakespearean plays involving non-European characters, *Titus Andronicus*, *Othello* and *The Tempest*. The analysis of those plays not only focuses on how imagery serves to construct character, but equally considers how characterisation is used to expose the discourse of the spotted as a construct and a powerful rhetorical device. The study concludes by reviewing its main findings within the larger contexts of Renaissance studies and of critical theory on interethnic encounters.

Abstract (Deutsch)

Diese interdisziplinär angelegte Studie erforscht eine im Kolonialdiskurs der frühen Neuzeit weitverbreitete Symbolik, welche verschiedene Gruppierungen von Nicht-Europäern als verdorben und sündhaft entwertet. Basierend auf einer Menge von Text- und Bildquellen dokumentiert die Arbeit die Instrumentalisierung der bildhaften Metapher des Befleckten, um physiologische Differenzen, insbesondere Hautfarbe, als Symptome von Bestialität, Krankheit oder grenzenloser Lust auszulegen. Während eine Vielzahl von Texten der Renaissance diesen Kodex des Gefleckten direkt benutzt, um die Abgrenzung von ethnischer Andersartigkeit zu propagieren, finden sich jedoch auch Werke in denen die Logik dieser Symbolik kritisch hinterfragt wird. Aufbauend auf einer umfassenden Skizzierung der drei Archetypen des Gefleckten (stellvertretend für das Tierische, das Kranke und die Lust), erläutert die Studie die Funktion dieser Symbolik im Kontext dreier Shakespeare Tragödien mit prominenten Nicht-Europäischen dramatischen Figuren: *Titus Andronicus*, *Othello* und *The Tempest*. Dieser Teil der Studie befasst sich nicht nur mit der Art und Weise, wie der Diskurs des Gefleckten der Charakterisierung dient, sondern auch mit den zuweilen kritischen Standpunkten, welche diese Stücke gegenüber dieser Rhetorik einnehmen. Die Studie schliesst mit einer Betrachtung über die Aussagekraft und Relevanz der Forschungsergebnisse im Bezug auf Studien zur Frühen Neuzeit sowie im Kontext der neueren Literaturtheorie über interkulturelle Kommunikation.

Acknowledgements

It is a great pleasure to thank all those individuals and institutions without whose help I would not have been able to complete this study, and whose debts will be difficult for me to recompense. Certainly, this piece of research would have never materialised without the generous financial support of two foundations, the *Schweizerischer Nationalfonds* (SNF) and the *Fonds zur Förderung des akademischen Nachwuchses des Universitätsvereins Zürich* (FAN), whose contributions enabled me to focus full-time on my project for two years.

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On a more personal note, let me express my gratitude to my parents, Josef and Katharina Auf der Maur, and to my parents-in-law, Fedder and Christel Hindrichsen, for their love and generosity. I also want to thank my wife Ida for all she has given me during those years. This thesis is lovingly dedicated to her.

Zurich, 8th June 2005

Lorenz Auf der Maur

Preface

It is not things themselves, but opinions concerning things, which disturb men.
(Epictetus; Motto to *Tristam Shandy*)

Laurence Sterne's motto to *Tristam Shandy*, 'It is not things themselves, but opinions concerning things which disturb men', strikes me as an apt précis of the theme of this thesis and of the process of its making. Growing out of a desire to learn about the African continent and its past triggered by a trip to Ethiopia some years ago, this whole project has darted off in unexpected, not to say erratic ways. In the course of this study, an initial search for 'things' (or historical facts) was quickly abandoned in favour of examining diverging 'opinions' until, finally, it turned into an analysis of some rather distressing imagery and symbolism characterising early modern[1] colonial discourse. Although the characters and stereotypes encountered in this study bear little resemblance to any genuine historical figures, they become only too real in the haunted researcher's mind. As anyone working in the same field will confirm, non-European stereotypes of the early modern period often appear both disturb*ed* and disturb*ing*: with their bodies grossly distorted through the filter of the Western imagination, their eerie presence acts as a chilling reminder of a troubled and troubling past, a past which has had serious repercussions up to the present day.

Leafing through standard reference works on the history of Africa, one repeatedly wishes with Tristam, though in a much more serious vein, that 'they' had 'minded what they were about', had 'weighed and considered' the consequences of their actions when landing on African soil. The imminent results of that early modern discovery, as history teaches us, were devastating: large numbers of its inhabitants were killed, displaced, disrupted, enslaved, and systematically exploited. Even for a descendant of a land-locked country with seemingly few overt links to 'their' colonial history, working on the subject has proved a deeply unsettling experience. Much more troubling than the 'things' or the horrors of the past, to pick up Sterne's line, has been coming to terms with the 'opinions', or the rationale condoning and justifying such criminal acts. Seeking comfort in the absence of any direct ties between one's ancestry on the one hand and colonialist and imperialist enterprises on the other becomes illusionary as soon as one becomes aware of the permeability of the ideas fuelling such designs in the Western tradition.

Many 'white' researchers working on the topic of Western texts on non-Europeans seem to have been afflicted by a similar kind of anxiety and unease. For instance Alden T. Vaughan, in *Roots of American Racism* (1995), professes to be much troubled by the "*gnawing question*" of why Anglo-Americans were "contemptuous of people they barely knew" (1995:162, emphasis added). Similarly, a

[1] In the present study, *early modern* and *Renaissance* are used interchangeably. On the history, the usefulness and the limitations of the two concepts when applied to 15th and 16th century English culture, see Bruster (2003:149-63).

large number of studies building on Eldred Jones' *Othello's Countrymen* (1965) and Winthrop D. Jordan's *White over Black* (1968) have struggled to purge a Western mind from its troubling past.[2] Even Frank Böckelmann's *Die Gelben, die Schwarzen, die Weissen*, which weighs contemporary Western 'racism' against cultural bias in non-European traditions, cannot fully eliminate the traces of such agony, in spite of his earnest protestations to the contrary (1998:452). Given this overarching sense of a 'collective Western guilt', doing research on the topic bears uncanny similarities to an Oedipal quest for knowledge. Many researchers are haunted by the thought that a past age or a cultural tradition may fail to meet modern standards of acceptability, yet nonetheless persist in pursuing such an avenue of research.[3] There is thus an acute anxiety about discovering what ought not to be there, namely shades of extremist, fundamentalist, racist thought, and one cannot help noticing instances in which evidence of 'racist' ideology is deliberately being toned down, juxtaposed to more hostile traditions, or written off as an offshoot of a more sinister ideology originating elsewhere.[4] This general sense of foreboding is sometimes intensified by fears of being victimised for taking a controversial stance in one's work, analogous to the experiences some eminent scholars on colonial discourse have had to share.[5]

As a consequence of this tense atmosphere, researchers all over the world have been forced to take sides in an increasingly polarised debate. A case in point is the critical debate enveloping *The Tempest*, a play which over the last decades has become a bone of contention between postcolonialist critics and exponents of more traditional schools. Unfortunately, members of both camps have fallen into similar ideological traps, narrowing their critical appreciation of a complex, multifaceted play. With traditional scholars on the retreat,[6] postcolonialists have successfully taken that "wondrous Isle" in a storm, appropriating it in a series of readings in which ideology overwhelms text, and sometimes even becomes the sole engine behind academic endeavour. While there is no denying that postcolonial criticism has acted as an important corrective to a formerly one-sided perspective, it is seminal to realise that the foregrounding of ideological concerns has come at a price. Postcolonial critics may have successfully mapped out the dynamics of colonial discourse in a wider sense, yet they have often neglected to show through what kind of topoi, symbols and narratives such colonial desire is actually expressed. This study aims to close this gap by scrutinising the deep structure underlying the symbolism of early modern colonial discourse. Rather unconventionally, though, this study reduces

[2] See e.g. the prefaces to Lyons (1975) and to Haynes (2002), both of whom identify personal encounters of colour prejudice as the starting point of their studies.
[3] I am thinking here especially of Frank M. Snowden's studies on 'race prejudice' in antiquity (1970, 1983), and of his belligerent review of Lloyd Thompson's *Romans and Blacks* (1989) in the *American Journal of Philology* (1990).
[4] This tendency of 'passing the buck' to other traditions personally reminds me of the card game 'Black Peter', now ousted as politically incorrect, which has been widespread in German-speaking areas until recently. The objective of the game is to avoid keeping the card bearing Black Peter's image; whoever holds it in his hand when the game is interrupted has lost the round. On Dutch variations of the game, see Blakely (1993: 75-77).
[5] See for instance the vicious attacks against Winthrop D. Jordan, occasioned by his (unfounded) assertion that the myth of Ham's curse had entered the Western canon via Jewish writing (Davis 1997:11).
[6] See Harold Bloom's attack against "Marxists, multiculturalists, feminists, *nouveau* historicists" and others who are "simply not interested in reading the play" (1998:662), or the following statement by Brian Vickers: "If modern critics want to denounce colonialism they should do so by all means, but this is the wrong play" (Lindley 2002:39).

the formalism and critical apparatus typical of postcolonialist criticism to a minimum, based on the conviction that Renaissance texts express the polysemy inherent in such discourse more economically, more powerfully and far more elegantly than modern critical metalanguage ever can. As Keir Elam's refreshing article (1996) on semiotics and Shakespeare has shown, much of what modern theory claims to have 'discovered' about the bard's plays is already reflected in these texts themselves, albeit dressed in Elizabethan clothes. Just like Keir, the present study strongly believes in the capacity of early modern texts to speak out for themselves, and therefore analyses the extraordinary intertextuality characterising the symbolism analysed below by contextualising (and historicising) its usage in a wide range of early modern sources.

One major criticism this study must face relates to the Eurocentric perspective it adopts. While minutely elaborating on the making of European myth, it fails to counterbalance such rhetoric with an appropriate body of self-reflective 'colonial' voices, as Paul Gilroy has recently called for in his influential theorising of *The Black Atlantic* (1993). The reason for this imbalance is methodological. Whereas from the late 18th century onwards there is ample source material for writing studies endorsing such a multiple perspective – witness Helen Thomas' *Romanticism and Slave Narratives* (2000) – earlier non-Western sources lending themselves to such a comparison are extremely rare.[7] Perhaps the most likely candidate for such an enterprise, Leo Africanus' celebrated *History*, has recently been shown to have undergone such substantial editorial changes that it cannot be taken to represent an undadulturated non-Western perspective.[8] Since including other contemporary non-European sources are beset with plenty of linguistic and methodological difficulties,[9] the present study must remain within the confines of the Western tradition, hoping that the study of alternative traditions will be undertaken by those more suitably qualified for such a task.

I have made great efforts to acknowledge the achievements of previous scholars as accurately as possible. References follow the Harvard system, starting with the year of publication, followed by volume, chapter, and page (e.g. Purchas 1613:6.14.454), a format which will be familiar to

[7] Consider the wide range of late 18th century African writers publishing in English: Olaudah Equiano, Phillis Wheatley, Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, Ottobah Cugoano or Ignatius Sancho, to name just a few. For their biographies, see Shyllon (1977), and for an introduction to their writing strategies, see Sandiford (1988).

[8] A Granada-born North African Moor exiled to Fez, Leo (c1485-1554) travelled through Northern Africa to Ghana on diplomatic missions until being caught by Christian pirates, who offered him as a present to Pope Leo X. Baptised as "Johannis Leo de Medici", he was commissioned to set down whatever he knew about Africa, resulting in the most detailed account Europeans had ever received of the continent's interior. Leo Africanus' account has often been used in discussions of Africans since Pory's translation (1600) served as a source text for the portrayal of Africans on the Elizabethan stage (Whitney 1922, Jones 1965:20-25) and in European medical discourse (Parker 1994: 84-90). However, given the serious editorial changes to the text by Ramusio (1550) and Pory (1600) from the original Italian and Arabic manuscript (1526), considering Leo as an 'African' text is highly questionable (Rauchenberger 1999:146-47). Moreover, Leo's motivation for writing down his memories – being compelled to do so by Pope Leo X rather than writing out of free will – further undermines his reliability as an impartial 'African' witness.

[9] See e.g. James R. Andreas' "The Curse of Cush: Othello's Judaic Ancestry" (2002), which compares stereotypes of Africans and Jews in Shakespeare and Leo Africanus. Although offering some interesting insights, Andreas' superficial reading of Leo's sources, and his misinterpretation of the Falasha (the 'Ethiopian Jews') in Leo (2002:173-174) make his article a qualified success.

philologists, linguists and literary theorists, yet somewhat less so to the majority of literary critics and cultural historians. The reason for opting for this format has quite simply been space. Quoting by using abbreviated titles would have considerably increased the total amount of pages, especially since the text is annotated rather copiously. Another editorial feature which has seemed indispensable is the extensive footnoting, which is used for citing larger clusters of documentary evidence, or for pointing out avenues for further research the study cannot pursue in adequate depth. Also, it seems only fair to point out that whenever a quote from a critical study was checked against the original document, reference is made to that primary source alone, thereby allowing the reader to access directly the material upon which all further discussion should be based. However, where a hint dropped by a particular study opened up a completely new avenue of thought, then such a debt is made explicit in one form or another. In spite of all efforts to the contrary, many important acknowledgements will have slipped through in the process of compiling and rearranging material, and of writing this thesis. To all those slighted of their just reward, I offer my sincere apologies.

1. Introduction

Towards Reading the Spotted

Lying about a far-away place is easy (Amhara Proverb)

The underlying premise of this study is a simple hypothesis whose reliability may be empirically validated on an everyday basis. It is assumed that during the Renaissance, as well as in the modern period, the 'othering' of individuals and groups follows a set pattern which alternately evokes images of bestiality, physical and mental illness, and sexual perversion. No matter whether one surveys the semantic fields of (post)modern swearing or of Renaissance cursing, the triad of the beast, the diseased body and the pervert seems omnipresent. One possible explanation for the permanence of these archetypes is offered by Sander L. Gilman, who in his *Difference and Pathology* (1985:23) defines the three major poles of human self-identification as sexuality, illness and 'race'.[1] While the mere presence of the topoi of bestiality, disease and perversion will be familar to the researcher dealing with colonial discourse, grasping their full significance in Renaissance texts nevertheless offers considerable difficulties because of the unfamiliar shape these images may assume. In early modern colonial discourse, the three most prominent symbols by which otherness is encoded are the leopard, the leper and the lecher, and they coalesce in a symbolism juxtaposing spotted 'otherness' to an idealised vision of an immaculate, uncorrupted male European 'self'. In these images of otherness, the spotted stands for the physically marked, the morally stained, and the spiritually defiled, and intersects in a plurality of myths of monstrous hybridity. Not surprisingly, this symbolism of purity and danger is regularly invoked in those settings where colonial space exacerbates the desire for a homogeneous 'white' culture, which is mythologised as prelapsarian and springing from an ethnically 'pure' stock.

Even though the pattern of othering described in this study is indiscriminately levelled at a variety of different ethnicities, it seems to have been most frequently invoked to achieve a separation between the European 'white' norm and the African body. Rhetoric figures demonising hybridity and 'spottedness' are particularly widespread between the 1550s and the 1620s, when the status of interethnic relations between 'black' and 'white' is customised. The 1550s sees the belated arrival of English explorers on the African West coast, inaugurates the commercial shipping of Africans to England, and sparks heated debates on the nature and significance of skin colour. By the 1620s, European-African relations have not only become a universal theme of reflection in literary, historical and religious debates; that time period also sees the first shipment of Africans to the English colonies of the Americas, and thus lends the colonial desire expressed in earlier writing a new social (con)text. Because the reigns of Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603) and James I (1603-1625) mark the defining

[1] Since 'race' naturally includes the differentiation between the human and the bestial, Gilman's triangle may very well be seen as validating the three archetypes foregrounded in this study.

moments in establishing anglophone attitudes towards the African body, they shall serve as the historical space within which this study operates. In terms of literary production, this time span coincides roughly with the publications appearing between Richard Eden's *Decades* (1555), the earliest major collection of travel narratives in the English language, and the *First Folio* (1623).

Since the developments leading up to the codification of 'racial' discrimination in the Restoration Period has only been fragmentarily documented in historical records and in critical works, this study shortcuts a more extensive historical mapping of anglophone concepts of racial segregation by limiting itself to the level of rhetoric alone. Adopting such a narrow scope seems indispensable, especially since the symbolism of the spotted is a cultural code of great complexity. Like a secret code it is only mastered by the initiated. Like a Machiavellian code it furthers the exertion of power over certain groups and individuals. Like a moral code, it compels members of society into action, and like a legal code it consolidates a social inegality which is first silently tolerated if not encouraged and later on formally endorsed at state level. Analogous to the "Code Noir", which will determine the fate of colonial subjects in French colonies from the 18th century onwards, the symbolism of the spotted establishes legal, social and discursive constraints which will subsequently be codified in the laws stipulating 'racial' segregation in the 1660s in the anglophone American colonies. Yet before acquiring its legal authority, the code persists merely as a cultural or a visual code, that is, an a shared prejudice against physical – and especially somatic – difference by which 'white' communities define themselves in juxtaposition towards other cultures.

In order to canvass this code of the spotted in its entirety, the present study must be unapologetically transdisciplinary. It historicises spotted symbols by drawing from a wide range of literary, non-literary and visual sources, and draws eclectically from literary criticism, anthropology, iconography and philology. While the first part of this study attempts to flesh out the particularities of Renaissance symbolism by reverting to a variety of classical, medieval and early modern texts, the second part offers a close-reading of three plays which have become staple diet in studies on 'race' in the English Renaissance: *Titus Andronicus*, *Othello* and *The Tempest*. Offering a rereading of these well-known plays will not only facilitate assessing the viability of the theories proposed, but it may also advance scholarship on those particular texts themselves. Incorporating *Othello* and *The Tempest* seems particularly important, since these plays have been literally canonised in literature departments worldwide. Furthermore, being regularly enacted on stage and adapted in modern film versions, they repeatedly raise the question of how to come to terms with early modern representations of ethnicity within a postmodern environment (Loomba 2000). As this study argues, much of the anxiety and the disquiet characterising modern debates on these plays does not only result from the heightened sensibilities of a multiethnic, global audience. Rather, it is the very element of unease pervading the

language of these plays, their noisy "semiotic *chora*", as Julia Kristeva calls it (Leitch 2001:2169-75), which affects readers and audiences still today.

The significance of the code of the spotted as an organising principle in colonial discourse rests in its ability to conceal uncertainty, to bypass semantic confusion and to silence cultural otherness. Much of the significance of the topoi analysed below will be lost if one does not recognise such rhetoric as a Macchiavellian instrument to overcome a crisis which during the Renaissance persists on a scientific, lingustic, epistemological, intercultural level. Thus, prior to focusing on the code of the spotted as such, the following section shall sketch out the climate of uncertainty created by (1) the onset of intercontinental travelling and trade, (2) the linguistic instability resulting from the impact of foreign tongues upon the English language, (3) the consequences of linguistic volatility on the mapping of foreign continents and foreign nations, and (4) the impossibility of establishing coherent 'racial' categories.

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Winthrop Jordan (1968:42) and numerous critics after him have taken note of a general sense of anxiety pervading the Renaissance texts customarily labelled 'colonial discourse'.[2] Even though Elizabethans and Jacobeans vociferously celebrate England's achievements, particularly after Francis Drake's circumnavigation of the globe in 1580 (Sherman 2002:18), there is occasionally also a bleaker subtext seeping through. Travelling accounts of the time seem primarily preoccupied with 'tangible' threats, such as storms, shipwrecks, faulty navigation, or skirmishes with natives and with other European crews. Subliminally, though, travel also evokes more inarticulate forebodings relating to the novelty of the experience itself: fears of monstrous races and of cannibals, dread of hot climate and its effect on human character, alarm over physical and mental health (Kupperman 1984). Several English sources expressing grave concern at the thought of shipwrecked English travellers 'going native', turning 'cannibal', or being 'bastardized' by mingling with non-Europeans (Vaughan 1997:179, Hadfield 2001:5).[3] Towering above all these phobias, the present study argues, lingers a universal fear of an entire metaphysical system collapsing through establishing contact with the new. Encountering nations inhabiting a space outside biblical geography directly questions the authoritative status of

[2] Compare Kathleen M. Brown, who sees the volatility of early modern colonial discourse primarily reflected in the inability to construct stable categories of gender and ethnicity (1996:41, 63).

[3] As Andrew Hadfield states: "The discourses of early modern travel and colonial writing are saturated with the fear of degeneration, miscegenation, and with the traveller refusing to return" (2001:5). Perhaps the most threatening form such 'degeneracy' assumes is topicalised in Richard Hakluyt's reprint of Master Hore's report on a journey to Newfoundland, according to which one sailor is said to have "killed his mate while hee stouped to take up a roote for his reliefe, and cutting out pieces of his body whome he had murthered, broyled the same on the coles and greedily devoured them" (Vaughan 1997:177).

Genesis. Likewise, traditional theories about the properties of the human body, and about skin oclour in particular, are challenged by meeting humans who in the travellers' eyes seem to deviate from 'God's own image in man'. The more intense the colonial encounter with these 'aliens' becomes, the more frequently Renaissance texts express the desire to 'segregate' themselves from an 'other' which does not prove as different as early modern rhetoric keeps suggesting.

Yet, and this is an aspect critics on Renaissance attitudes to 'race' have too often ignored, the economic success of generating colonial wealth comes at a psychological price. It is not surprising that a great deal of colonial discourse negating or exonerating such a systemic exploitation should, in Homi Bhabha's terms, bear the symptoms of a "pathological disorder at a State level" (Mills 1997:123). Many critical studies analysing Renaissance discourse on various social, religious and ethnic groups seem to have found that the deliberate misrepresentation of Africans as 'animals', 'madmen' or 'barbarians' proceeded from a vantage point characterised by self-righteousness, smugness and a total absence of empathy with those thus othered. However, this is not necessarily the only view shared at the time. When scrutinising printed material from this time period, one repeatedly finds texts reflecting a guilt-ridden, self-questioning attitude. The best-known of these criticisms are by non-English writers, such as Bartolomé de la Casas, Michel Montaigne or Damião de Goís, whose writings were available in English translations at the time.[4] English examples include the report by John Sparke, an officer on John Hawkins' third slave voyage to Africa and the West Indies (1569), who cannot help stressing the "civility" and "gentle and loving" nature of the Africans his crew is about to "ensnare" (Hakluyt 1600:3.503).[5] Lastly, Richard Jobson's *The Golden Trade: or a Discovery of the River Gambra* (1623), too, breaks with the rhetoric predominating at the time. In a memorable passage, Jobson describes at length how he refused to purchase African slaves from an African slave trader.[6] Although one may discard Jobson's statement as a simple trick to elevate the 'dignified' English above 'barbarians' selling their own kind, his statement is still remarkable in the sense that it presupposes a common origin in a humankind across continents which the discourse on 'bestial', 'sick' and 'hypersexualised' colonial bodies constantly denies.

Early modern colonial discourse, then, must not be conceived of as monolithic, but as accommodating critical voices who could challenge a prevalent bias within culturally-defined limits.

[4] Bartolomé de las Casas' famous *Briefe chronicle of the acts of the Spaniardes in the West Indies*, published in English translation in 1583, raises fundamental questions regarding the treatment of non-Europeans in general. Michel de Montaigne's illustrious essay "Of Canniballs", accessible via John Florio's translation (1603:1.20.100-107), questions the legitimacy of reducing the concept of 'culture' to an ethnocentric self-aggrandizement. The Portuguese humanist Damião de Goís paints a highly sympathetic portrait of the inhabitants of the Ethiopian kingdom, a state which the Portuguese crown also assisted with military force in an armed conflict against the Ottoman empire. De Goís' shortish *Legacy of Prester John* (1532) was translated just one year after its publication into English by Thomas More's son John More (More 1533, also reprinted in Blackburn 1967). His more extensive *Fides, religio moresque Aethiopum* (1540) was available in Latin only.

[5] Compare Sparke's narrative to the one by his captain Hawkins, who coldly gauges the "successe of this enterprise" by measuring the amount of human "commoditie" he has sold (Hakluyt 1600:3.521).For a general introduction to Hawkins, Sparke and travel literature, see Parks (1974).

[6] "I made answer, We [English] were a people, who did not deale in any such commodities, neither did wee buy or sell one another, or any that had our owne shapes" (Hair 1999:51-52).

For the purpose of studying early modern texts, this effectively means that there are various possibilities in which discriminatory symbols may be undermined. One form such an inversion may assume corresponds to what Mikhail Bakthin describes as the 'carnivalisation' of a text. In Shakespearean drama, the overturning of established hierarchies is often signposted by the appearance of a fool, and it seems indeed striking that in all three plays analysed below (*Titus Andronicus*, *Othello* and *The Tempest*), there are clowns, jesters or fools whose appearances signpost the imagining of alternative realities.[7] Expressing social criticism through the carnivalesque, though, is limited in scope. Just as in actual terms the Renaissance festivity of carnival is temporally constrained, so too the criticism of state-approved exploitation and segregation of social and ethnic groups is limited to a narrowly circumscribed space. Renaissance discourse lacks the forceful, frank criticism typical of abolitionist texts from the late 17th century onwards, and for the modern reader many Renaissance texts may seem to differ only insignificantly with respect to the cultural bias they express. Therefore, it is only by historicising and contextualising narratives and symbolism of early modern colonial discourse that shades in meaning with respect to ethnic and somatic otherness may be brought back to the surface.

In contrast to post-Enlightenment sources, which justify the oppression of fellow human beings via pseudo-scientific arguments, similarly biased Renaissance voices lack the framework of later 'racial' theories and must therefore resort to a far less explicit symbolic code. Symbolism has several advantages over straighforward prose, one of them being that symbols are immune against charges of irrationality. As Dan Sperber points out, "symbolism is not open to scientific investigation", and cannot be "irrational, […], only poorly-interpreted" (1975:4). Symbols do not make assertions, but merely insinuate. They do not offer logical deductions, but establish semantic associations. Obscure to the outsider, yet worshipped as kernels of truth by the initiated, they are only accessible to those 'in the know', and therefore act as a natural, cultural divide. Those "in control of the circulation of symbolic capital" (Schorsch 2004:299) exert considerable power over society, a power that must not be underestimated. As this study suggests, several key concepts forming the backbone of colonial discourse – such as the belief in the 'naturalness' of a 'colour line' – are mainly conveyed by means of symbolic language rather than by more explicit discourse. The power emanating from these symbols resides not only in the subtle ways in which they evade criticism, but also in their wide dissemination and their longevity. Effortlessly learnt by those 'enculturated', but only 'unlearnt' with great difficulty, they pertain to a symbolic code which has been instrumental in consolidating a colour bias whose repercussions can be felt to the present day.

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[7] Far less known than the jesters in *The Tempest* (Trinculo and Stephano) are the clowns in *Othello* (3.1.3-28, 3.4.1-20) and in *Titus Andronicus* (4.3.77-112; 4.4.39-48).

Renaissance England witnesses intensified contacts with foreign nations, with the result that long-established modes of communication, and the medium of language itself, are significantly altered, almost beyond recognition. A new pronunciation of vowels, effected by the so-called 'Great Vowel Shift', deals a deathblow to the former unity of letter and sound, and contributes towards the gradual severing of the English tradition from Latin. This new and highly idiosyncratic pronunciation of English seriously hinders reaching an advanced level of proficiency in the medieval lingua franca (Salmon 1985:173), which in turn makes the number of English publications in Latin plummet sharply. Whereas in 1516 the humanist Thomas More still publishes his influential *Utopia* in both English and in Latin, sizeable 17th century works, such as Walter Ralegh's *History of the World* (1614), will be printed in English only (Waswo 1999:409). Robert Burton's famous complaint in 1621 that he could not find a publisher "willing to print his mammoth book in Latin" (Waswo 1999:409) underscores that by the early 17th century, England had effectively turned monolingual. Latin became a privilege enjoyed by a dwindling elite, a fact also recognised by the lexicographer Joshua Poole, who lamented in 1646: "[W]ee let not onely the Scholars, but even many Mechanicks, of almost all Nations in Europe, outstrip us in a facility of expressing themselves in the Latine" (Salmon 1985:173). During the Renaissance, then, the Latin tongue is gradually replaced by a new national language in which the rise of the English empire is written (Helgerson 2000).

However, this new language is by no means as 'pure' as its fervent advocates pretend. Due to their intensifying contacts with foreign continents and distant nations, the English begin to absorb for the first time a considerable number of expressions from non-European languages in their own tongue (Barber 1976:182-83). Among the influx of foreign idioms creeping into the English tongue at the time we find expressions for trading (*bazaar* 1599), foreign produce (*tobacco* 1588, *molasses* 1582, *coffee* 1598, *sherry* 1597), unfamiliar plants (*banana* 1597), exotic animals (*alligator* 1568, *mosquito* 1583, *zebra* 1600), strange peoples (*cannibal* 1553, *Negro* 1555, *mestizo* 1588, *mulatto* 1595, *Creole* 1604), or alien pagan rites (*dervish* 1585, *fetish* 1613). Between 1580 and 1620, when the increase in foreign loan words is reaching its peak (Hughes 2000:152-53), there is literally a *tornado*, a *typhoon* or a *hurricane* of the foreign gathering momentum and shaking the English language to its roots.[8]

Unsurprisingly, responses towards this expansion of the English tongue are very mixed. Charles Barber in his classic study on early modern English has identified three main groups partaking in the so-called 'inkhorn controversy' about 'proper' language use: 'neologizers' welcoming the integration of new loan words, particularly from Latin, 'purists' arguing for the formation of new

[8] *Tornado* (first recorded 1556) from Spanish *tornada* ('thunder'), also influenced by Spanish *tornar* ('to turn'); *typhoon* (1588) from Portuguese *tufão*, probably deriving from Urdu *tufan*; *hurricane* (16th c.) from Spanish *huracan* and Portuguese *furacão*). The most comprehensive discussion of non-European vocabulary, which often enters via Spanish and Portuguese, is offered by Serjeantson (1935: 195-202; 206-209) and Barber (1976:178-84). See also the *OED* on *fetish* (from Portuguese *feitiço* ('charm', 'sorcery')), *molasses* (from Portuguese *melaços*, which in turn derives from the Latin word for honey (*mel*), and *tobacco* (from Spanish *tabaco*, which is borrowed from Carribean or American native languages).

English compounds in order to avert the absorption of foreign vocabulary, and 'archaizers' pleading for reviving obsolete words from earlier texts (Barber 1976:79-100). Even though the inkhorn controversy was primarily fought over the 'corruption' of English by the hands of other *European* languages, it is reasonable to surmise that the scepticism voiced against linguistic innovation would have equally pertained to the impact of non-European tongues, particularly where these influences, in the words of Thomas Chaloner, a purist writing in the mid-16th century, "darken[ed] the sence unto the reader" (Hughes 2000:155). And indeed, there would have been no shortage of foreign linguistic oddities which could be perceived as undermining the construction of coherent, meaningful discourse, such as *turkeys* alien to Turkey, *Guinea pigs* not found in Guinea, or a *Greenland* which is anything but green.[9]

Ironically, when purists deplore the 'corruption' of their own language, they consistently fail to consider that the imperfect incorporation of these words also represents a corruption of these respective languages. Several non-European expressions entering English at that time bear testimony to a pitiful lack of linguistic competence on behalf of Europeans travellers. A point in case is the term *Sierra Leone*, a curious Ibero-Italian blend, which has remained alive in anglophone culture to the present day.[10] An even more prominent misnomer might be the name *Canada*, which seems to have been coined accidentally by French explorers misinterpreting an utterance of natives.[11] This faulty incorporation of foreign loanwords is not restricted to expressions seeping in from outside Europe; rather, given that the integration of foreign terms is by necessity 'flawed', these non-European misnomers merely represent a continuation of a much older assimilation of Hebrew, Greek or Latin concepts. One memorable example of an ancient concept unwittingly misused is the term *Babel*, which in Renaissance texts is frequently confused with *Babylon*.[12] The symbol of Babel thus literally triggers the confusion its narrative mythologises, leading the English written tradition even further astray from an imaginary, nostalgic vision of language as an idealised, orderly, and semantically stable medium of communication.

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[9] *Turkey* could in the Early Modern Period simply mean 'foreign', yet the naming of turkeys is even more complex than that. The term was originally used for the *Guinea fowl* imported by Turkish traders to Europe. Later, though, the name was applied incorrectly to the North American bird (Room 1986, "turkey", Madison and Frankforter 1995:157). On the confusion between *Guyana* (in South America) and *Guinea* (in West Africa) see the *OED* ("Guinea pig"). *Greenland* may originally derive its name from the colour green, or from a term meaning 'land of fir trees', reflecting the belief that the wood washed up on Iceland's shores originated from there. Either way, the name seems to have been intended as propaganda by Eric the Red to persuade other Icelanders to follow him into exile (Resen 1987:15). Early modern Scandinavian explorers, keen on promoting their expeditions, revitalised Eric the Red's myth. For instance Jens Munk depicts in his *Navigatio Septentrionalis* (1624) a densely forested – and literally green – Greenland (Resen 1987:41).

[10] See P.E.H. Hair, "The Spelling and Connotation of the Toponym 'Sierra Leone' since 1461" (1997). The corruption of the term from Spanish *Sierra Leona* actually occurs after Hakluyt and Purchas, as Hair documents. Nevertheless, I am using the example here as a memorable example of the various ways in which the English language distorts foreign loan words, particularly when they enter via more than one intermediary language.

[11] Legend has it that when the French explorer Jacques Cartier asked indigenous Iroquois about the name of their land, they assumed that he was enquiring about the whereabouts of their settlements, and responded with *catana*, which in their language meant 'a village' (Hughes 2000:282).

[12] Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poesy* (1595), for instance, refers to "the Tower of Babilons curse", and the same error even features in the influential Geneva Bible of 1560 (Sivefors 2004:95).

Another factor intensifying this sense of linguistic instability is the realisation that words do not possess innate meanings, as medieval scholars consistently claim. Scholasticism professes an unbroken faith in the unity of the world and the word. Inspired by Boethius' translation of Aristotle's *On Interpretation*, many medieval scholars practice etymology as a 'form of exegesis', and seek to unveil the "sensus spiritualis" of linguistic concepts, based on the assumption that the coining of words coincided with the creation of the objects they signify (Frericks 1997:1133-35). Following Isidore of Seville (c.560-636), the intrinsic characteristics of God's creation are encoded in the three sacred languages of Hebrew, Greek and Latin (9.1.3), and can be made visible again by painstakingly reconstructing a word's etymology (1.29.1). Accordingly, Isidore derives *homo* ('human') from *humus* ('earth'), *vir* ('man') from *vis* ('strength') and *mulier* ('woman') from *mollis* ('soft'), *Goths* from *Magog*, and the *Britons* from *bruti* (i.e. 'stupid ones').[13]

However, the realisation that new worlds regularly disprove medieval dogma – including Isidore – erupts in the 'nature-convention controversy', a debate on whether or not names encode meaning (Donawerth 1984:26). Shakespeare repeatedly questions the inherent meaning in "words, words, words" (*HAM* 2.2.192), yet without reaching a final verdict. Even though the answer to Juliet's "What's in a name?" (*ROM* 2.1.85) seems to be that names are powerful social constructs, there are several instances in which names retain a deeper significance (Donawerth 1984:25-31).[14] Natural scientists, travellers and geographers, too,[15] find it difficult to abandon the idea of meaning in words entirely. As Walter Ralegh's map of the biblical East seeks to demonstrate, names *were* once endowed with a meaning which had, in the meantime, been almost completely obscured (1614:1.9.1). Similarly, George Sandys, a traveller to Egypt in 1610, is flabbergasted when learning that some local inhabitants think of the Nile as the Edenic river *Gihon*, and loudly condemns this belief as a deliberate falsification of biblical geography.[16] Ralegh and Sandys seem to share the same conviction that the relation between names and things – despite its erratic nature – must have once followed a coherent, organising principle. Their desperate attempt to reconcile biblical terminology with geographical entities becomes a major constraint hampering scientific enquiry. Given its authoritative status, the biblical text becomes a burden which may be neither questioned nor discarded.

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[13] *Homo* (XI.i.4), *vir* (XI.ii.17), *mulier* (XI.ii.18), *gothi* (IX.ii.89), *brittones* (IX.ii.102). A readable introduction together with an English translation of selected key passages is offered by Brehaut (1972). The standard edition is Lindsay's (1911). A critical French-Latin edition of selected volumes is currently in the making (Jacques 1986). Isidore's *Etymologies* were regularly reprinted and circulated from 1472 until the mid-16th century, when its influence begins to wane (Martels 2000:291).

[14] See for instance the soothsayer's interpretation of the names *Cymbeline* and *Leonatus* (*CYM* 5.5.443-58).

[15] Even Francis Bacon, though sceptical of etymologists in general, shares the view that "examining the power and Nature of Wordes, as they are the foot-steppes and prints of Reason […], [are] worthy to be reduced into a Science by itself" (Donawerth 1984:29).

[16] Sandys (1615:II.137). The identification of *Gihon* with the Nile, still shared in the Coptic and in the Ethiopian Church today, has always been problematic, since Gihon, together with the three other Edenic rivers (traditionally identified as Euphrat, Tigris and Indus), is said to spring from a common source (Gen 2:13). Augustine, the first to record the identification of Gihon with the Nile, ingeniously solves the problem by suggesting that all four rivers actually spring from a common subterranean source (Courtès 1979:2.10-11). Sandys' objection to Gihon as the Nile, however, also hinges on the Western tradition of placing Paradise in the East, a predicament solved in the *Geneva Bible* by reducing the four biblical streams to the two Mesopotomian ones, on the argument that they bear two names each (1562:2).

As G. K. Hunter succinctly states, in the Renaissance "[t]he world was still seen largely, in terms of vocabulary, as a network of religious names", with the result that the language at the disposal of voyagers and explorers often "frustrated any attempt at scientific discrimination" (1967:188). One author confirming Hunter's point is Walter Ralegh, who maintains that the accuracy of biblical geography may not be questioned:

> [I]t cannot bee said that he [Moses] treateth of an unknowne region. [...].[E]xcept wee shall impiously thinke that the Prophet spake hee knew not what, or used an impertinent discourse of those nations, which were not discovered in 2000.yeares after, inhabiting as farre south as the *Cape of good hope*, commonly knowne by the name of *Bona esperanza*. (Ralegh 1614:1.8.10.5.153)

Because of this unconditional surrender to biblical and classical text, the age of discovery keeps reinvoking old, traditional sets of beliefs. Whereas travellers and explorers promise 'brave new worlds', humanists continuously call for travelling back in time. Medieval and early modern cartographers mostly rely on a synopsis of classical geography, and appear reluctant to discard antiquated beliefs in favour of new findings (Baumgärtner 1987). Furthermore, when explorers like Columbus carry with them libraries of classical and medieval geography (Hulme 1986:21-22), 'discover'y truly becomes a 'recovery' of mythical lands in new, unknown space. Just as Columbus frantically tries to trace the court of the great Khan in Cuba, the Portuguese systematically skim the Horn of Africa for Prester John, while Scandinavians attempt to relocate long-lost Viking settlements in Greenland.[17] Ironically, in an age witnessing enormous progress and technological innovation, the 'old' often appears more trustworthy than the 'new'. Classical authorities such as Pliny, Herodotus or Pomponius Mela are often often considered more truthful than contemporary explorers, who are regularly dismissed as 'travel liars'.[18] Likewise, early modern explorers hardly ever achieve the authoritative status ascribed to John Mandeville, who is not only reprinted as a genuine travel report in excerpts in Richard Hakluyt's and Samuel Purchas' collections,[19] but whose authoritative status is even confirmed by Walter Ralegh, who, upon exploring Guyana, found "his relations true of such thinges as heeretofore were held incredible" (1596:70).

The consequences of such unbroken faith in classical and medieval authorities are not to be underestimated. Early modern travellers, their minds engrossed in medieval and classical myth, cross oceans in search of long-lost places and sunken continents, and miraculously 'find' them: Pliny's *Canaria* in the Atlantic, Ptolemy's river *Niger* in West Africa, the formidable *Amazones* first in West

[17] On Columbus' search for the great Khan's court, see Hulme (1986:13-43). Prester John, the mythical Christian ruler was first suspected to live in Asia (e.g. in Marco Polo), yet is from the 14th century until the 17th century presumed to be identical with the Ethiopian emperor (Knefelkampf (1986)). Viking settlements were thought to exist in Greenland up until the 18th century, and are generally indicated on all maps of the far north (cf. Resen 1987:31).

[18] On Renaissance editions and translations of Pliny and their effect on writings on Africa, see Merians (1998:125). On the influence of Herodotus on colonial discourse, see Hulme (1986:21-22). On Pomponius Mela, see Steele (1975:14). The topos of the 'travel liar' is discussed by Bennett (1954:219-62) and Adams (1962)

[19] Mandeville is also reprinted in excerpts in Hakluyt's and Purchas' collections, and on the frontispiece to *Purchas His Pilgrimages* (1625) he even appears side by side with illustrious figures such as Columbus, Magellan and Sir Francis Drake.

Africa and in Brazil, the *terra australis* in the South, and *Thule* of the Greeks in the far North.[20] Though constantly thwarted in their expectations, travellers defend preconceived geographical suppositions against all odds, and repeatedly ascribe clashes with received authorities to a corruption and distortion of an ancient 'order' on behalf of the natives. For instance when John Pory (1600), the translator of Leo Africanus, learns that the inhabitants in the Horn of Africa actually call themselves *Ethiopians* rather than *Abyssinians*, he categorically refuses to name them as such, on the grounds that in classical geography the term *Ethiopia* is used for the darker Nilotic tribes and for sub-Saharan Africans alone. Confiding in Greek authorities rather than in the native voices recorded in contemporary travelling accounts, Pory suspects that the 'Abyssinians' must have surreptitiously appropriated the term *Ethiopians* in order to enhance the "reputation of their prince" (1600:1.10). He therefore follows the tradition of Italian and Portuguese travellers in naming them *subjects of Prester John* or *Abyssinians*, two equally erroneous terms.[21]

The longevity of such geographical names not only illustrates the European insistence to impose its own order on 'disorderly' colonial territory, but an unwillingness to shed old conceptual frameworks, even in the face of compelling counter-evidence. The setting where rifts dividing scholastic learning and experience most blatantly appear is on the African continent. After the celebrated circumnavigation of Africa by Vasco da Gama from 1497 to 1499, innumerable 'dishonest' maps, replete with imaginary river systems and lakes, legendary kingdoms and rulers, leave no corner of the continent unchartered. Hidden beneath this dense texture of legend and myth lies a *terra incognita*, a vast unknown space, whose presence is systematically denied in cartography up to the 18th century. The French geographer Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville (1697-1782) is believed to be the first cartographer who radically discards these baroque embellishments, and presents the continent as what it truly is from a Western point of view: a vast empty space which has only been penetrated along a narrow coastline and along the banks of its navigable waterways (Figs. 1-2). By chartering supposedly well-known (yet in actual fact entirely unknown) exotic landscapes, early modern maps evoke a split identity typical of colonial discourse. Often, these fanciful maps of Africa are much less

[20] On Pliny's *Canaria* (*Natural History* 6.37) see Fernández-Armesto (1987:153-54). Whereas Western sources understand the *Niger* as corresponding to Ptolemy's *Nigris*, allegedly a tributary to the Nile (Pliny, *Natural History* 8.32), the name probably goes back to the Tuareg phrase *n-igereouen* (i.e. 'river of rivers'). *Niger* first occurs in Leo Africanus (1526), who might have been influenced by a West African tradition, by Ptolemy or by both (Room 1994: 141). The *Amazons* are in medieval times placed in Scythia (Adams 2000), yet the map prefaced to Pory (1600) places them in Southern Africa, presumably with reference to a legion of celibate female warriors in the African kingdom of Dahomey (Shepherd and Shepherd 2002:No.148). Roghly at the same time, the Amazons were also 'rediscovered' in Brazil, as emerges from the discussion in Walter Ralegh's *Discoverie of Guiana* (1595:21-24). On further mappings of the Amazons in medieval and early modern texts, see Hart (2003:82-90). On the classical and medieval concepts of *terra australis* and *Thule*, see Parker (2000) and Macfarlane (2000). Notice also that Montaigne still discusses the question whether or not the New World is identical with Plato's *Atlantis* in his essay "Of the Caniballes" (Florio 1603:1.20.100-01).

[21] *Abyssinia*, even though deriving from an indigenous root (Ethiopic *habasha*, Sabean and Arabic *hbšt*), represents a Western construct in the sense that Ethiopians only apply the term to their people (Amharic *habasha* = 'an Abyssinian') yet never to their state, which has consistently been called *Ethiopia* for centuries (Voigt 2003a). The misleading y-spelling in *Abyssinia* – triggered by a folk etymological link with Greek *abyssos* – is already challenged in the late 17th century by the German philologist and 'father of Ethiopian Studies' Hiob Ludolf, who points out in his *Commentarius ad Historiam Aethiopicam*: "[M]ulti male *Abyssini* scribunt, quia hæc vox cum *abysso* nihil habet in commune" (1691:49).

significant in what they represent than in what they systematically hide: a deeply-ingrained fear of the unknown, and a gloomy foreboding that the 'order' imposed on the territories thus chartered may ultimately turn out to be a hollow, fictitious construct.[22]

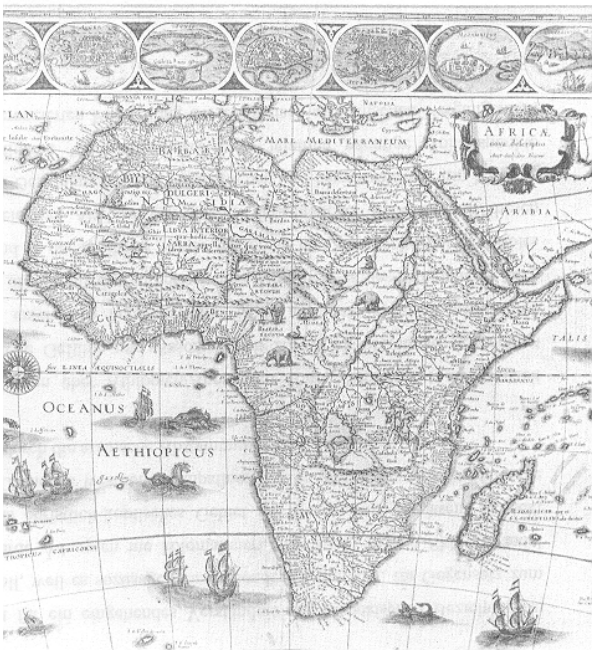

Figure 1. Willem Janszoon Blaeu's *Africae nova Descriptio* (Amsterdam 1630) (Norwich and Kolbe 1983:Map 32)

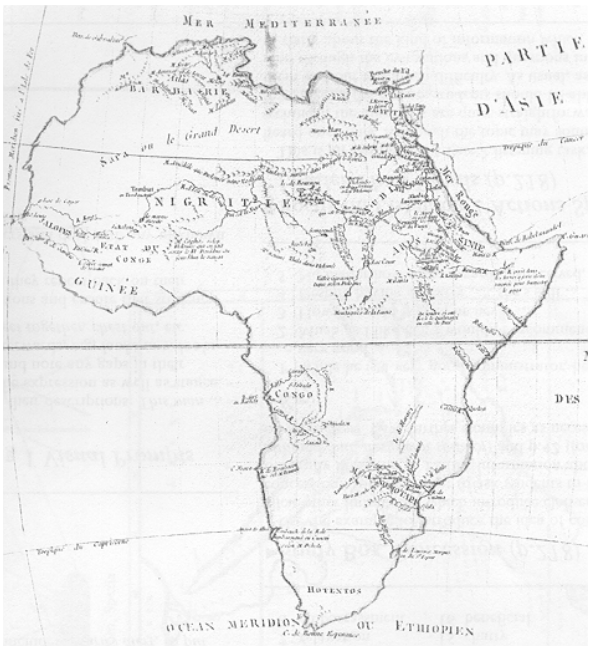

Figure 2. Jean Baptiste Bourgignon d'Anville's map of 1749 (Norwich and Kolbe 1983:Fig. xxix)

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Bearing in mind how seldom early modern colonial discourse conveys "accurate positive knowledge" on non-European territories and its inhabitants (Barbour 2003:194), it is amazing too see the importance critics have ascribed to the geographical terminology found in Renaissance writing. Much has been made of the ethnic labels cropping up in texts such as *Othello* or *The Tempest* to ascertain what reference point the bard had in mind when designing the 'griev'd Moor' or the 'strange fish' Caliban. Debates on issues such as Othello's skin colour, i.e. whether the progagonist was meant to represent a 'tawny' North African, or a 'black' sub-Saharan Moor, have been particularly heated – and unfruitful. Recently, the former consensus that Shakespeare intended Othello as a dark-skinned African, and that the 'Arab' or 'Oriental' Othello constitutes a post-Elizabethan convention motivated

[22] Such a perspective, it should be noted, does not pertain to the African continent alone. Rather, as Richmond Barbour concludes in his recent analysis of Elizabethan constructions of the East, the same conglomerate of myth, of decontextualised fact and of wishful thinking also characterises perceptions of the Elizabethan and Jacobean 'Orient' (2003:194).

by 'racist' ideologies, has been torn up again by readings of *Othello* as a 'Spanish play'.[23] However vehemently one rejects the 'racial' motivation giving rise to the orientalised Othello of later periods, it must be conceded that the evidence in favour of a 'sub-Saharan' Moor is far from satisfactory. Neither the exact ethnic status of Othello, nor the stereotype by which such ethnicity was encoded are sufficiently clarified in the play. After all, the term *Moor*, on whose interpretation the case rests, remains despite decades of scholarly endeavour an elusive, ambiguous term which e.g. Marlowe liberally applies to Native Americans (*Faustus* I.i.148) and Spenser to inhabitants of Malabar in southwestern India (*Faire Queene* VI.vii.43) (Lyons 1975:3).[24]

Furthermore, what may appear systematic in individual travel reports, such as in Richard Jobson's narrative on the river Gambia (1623) or in John Pory's translation of Leo Africanus (1600),[25] definitely loses its outward show of orderliness with literary texts. In the *Merchant of Venice*, for example, the anonymous African lover of Lancelot is alternatively described by two different 'racial' epithets (*Moor* and *Negro*) in two consecutive lines.[26] A similar confusion arises in *Lust's Dominion* (1599), a play which until 1825 was generally ascribed to Christopher Marlowe, then to Thomas Dekker (Hoy 1980:4.56), and more recently to an indeterminate group of collaborators (Cathcart 2001). As Elliot H. Tokson has pointed out (1982:2,40), the play's protagonist Eleazer, a Spanish-born Moor and Iago-like villain, is alternatingly described as a *Negro*, as an *African*, or as an *Indian* in a manner which cannot solely be attributed to the play's multiple authorship.[27] *The Merchant of Venice*, *Lust's Dominion* and similar texts,[28] then, furnish strong evidence that the nomenclature of foreign nations in early modern discourse is far more irregular and volatile than a 21st century reader might take for granted. As a result, one is forced to acknowledge that there is no other option than to regard the semantic fields of terms like *Moor*, *Negro*, *Blackamoor*, *Ethiopian* or *Indian* as overlapping and largely synonymous (Lyons 1975:3, Bartels 1990:434, Barbour 2003:15).

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[23] On the convention of an 'Arab', an 'Oriental' or a 'White' Othello, see Cowhig (1977), Hunter (1985), Collins (1996), Kaul (1996). Barbara Everett (1982) and Eric Griffin (1998) have postulated that the tragic hero ought to be read as a North African maligned by a 'Spanish' Iago, named after the Spanish national saint Santiago Matamauros, or 'the Moor-slayer'. Neither Everett nor Griffin regard the orientalised Othello of the Restoration stage and beyond as an accurate embodiment of 'their' North African Othello. Rather, they merely argue that the geographical context suggested in the play is North Africa, whatever implications this may have for stereotyping the 'Moor' on stage.

[24] For further references to *Moor* applied to real and imagined Asian Muslims, see the corresponding entry in *Hobson-Jobson* (1985:581-83). Emily C. Bartels confirms the fuzzy semantic field the term *Moor* encompasses with reference to Richard Hakluyt: "In Hakluyt, the term *Moor*, for example, sometimes designates color (black), sometimes religion (Moslem), sometimes region (Mauritania), sometimes all of the above, and sometimes none" (1992:520).

[25] See Richard Jobson's distinction between the "Fulbies, […] a Tawny people, [who] have a resemblance right unto those we call Egiptians [i.e. gypsies]" and the Mandingos, who are said to be "perfectly blacke" (1623:33, 37). On the usage of 'white' and 'black' in John Pory's translation of Leo, which is intrinsically intertwined with questions of (mis)translation and editorial changes, see Jones (1965:22-23), Barthélémy (1987:12-16), Zhiri (1991:51-84), Beckingham (1997:220) and Rauchenberger (1999:232).

[26] Lorenzo: "I shall answer that better to the commonwealth than you can the getting up of the *Negro's* belly. The *Moor* is with child by you, Lancelot" (*MV* 3.5.31-32, emphasis added).

[27] See the play's references to *Negro* or *African* (3.1.7, 3.2.48, 3.3.24, 4.2.33, 4.2.53, 4.3.24) and to *Indian* (1.2.158, 3.2.220, 4.2.85). The irregularity is commented on by Fredson Bowers, editor of Thomas Dekker's plays in the Cambridge edition (1968:4.122).

[28] For further documents utilising *Negro* for both 'Indians' as well as other 'ethnic mixtures', see Blackburn (1997a:13).

This "misrepresentation and confusion" of ethnicities in Renaissance texts does not stem from any identifiable work or source, as Anthony Gerard Barthélémy seems to suggest when blaming Pory's translation of Leo Africanus for "help[ing] to continue a tradition of misrepresentation and confusion in a time when Englishmen *could have* accurately differentiated between black Africans and white Africans, and blacks and Muslims." (Barthélémy 1987:16, emphasis added). Rather, much of the disorderly semantics is already ingrained in the classical and medieval authorities upon which Elizabethan and Jacobean learning on Africa is based (Appendix 1: "India"), a fact which already Samuel Purchas was aware of when complaining about the "confusion" surrounding the terms *India* and *Ethiopia* in some of the travelling accounts he edits (1613:7.3.559). The same instability characterises those terms entering English from Iberian sources. In Portuguese texts, there is no neat separation between *Moors* and *Negroes*, but one finds a medley of various expressions, such as *escravos mouros* (Moorish slaves), *escravos negros* (black slaves), *mouros forros* (free Moors) or *mouros negros* ('blackamoors') (Saunders 1982:xiii). Even more confusingly, the Portuguese in Brazil also frequently described American natives as either *negros* or *negros da terra* (Schorsch 2004:169). Since these terms all follow an idiosyncratic distribution of their own, a comprehensive theory of an 'orderly' English nomenclature would need to take into account the complex processes by which these classical, medieval and Iberian epithets entered English sources. Needless to say, such a comprehensive mapping of ethnic terms has not yet been attempted, and the chances of succeeding in such a task appear very slim.

Analogous to the distribution of proper nouns, the usage of colour adjectives by Elizabethans and Jacobeans also looks more irregular than most studies admit. Most 'race critics' have started from the premise that the early modern period grades various non-European ethnicities according to their skin colour in a similar way as later periods do. The tacit assumption underlying these studies is that 'tawny' natives would have been received more favourably than 'darker' natives. Such an hypothesis is also proposed by Eldred Jones in his pioneering study *Othello's Countrymen*, which sees the contrast between the malevolent, 'black' Aaron in *Titus Andronicus* and the dignified, 'tawny' Prince of Morocco in *The Merchant of Venice* codified in their different complexions.[29] Even though one may cite further evidence in favour of such a view, such as the vastly different judgements passed on Native Americans as opposed to sub-Saharan Africans in early modern discourse (Vaughan 1995:3-13), such a conceptual framework is very limiting and possibly misleading when applied to the study of early modern texts.

For one thing, one must not confuse Elizabethan 'tawny Moors' with the 'olive-complexioned', noble savages orientalised and fetishised in later periods. The stereotypical 'noble

[29] "The Prince of Morocco is described in a stage direction of the play as a tawny Moor. I believe that this was an attempt to distinguish him from a black Moor, […]. He was not meant to be a Negro" (Jones 1965:69).

savage', labelled as such by John Dryden,[30] represents a Restoration topos which is popularised up until the 20th century.[31] It seems highly questionable whether Elizabethans and Jacobeans would have expressed the same respectful admiration for Arab-like Moors, given the political context at the time. Although one century after ending the Reconquista (1492) the actual power of North African 'Moorish' kingdoms was waning, the presence of Africans in the Iberian kingdoms was still regarded as a major threat. Repeated attempts were made to 'cleanse' Spain and Portugal of their former 'oppressors', even of those who had converted to Christianity (Everett 1982:105). Given the unenviable reputation North African Moors held on the Iberian peninsula, it remains highly questionable whether Islamic 'tawny' Moors would have been perceived as distinctly 'nobler' than sub-Saharan Africans in England, a point which is frequently missed in reprints of the portrait of the Moroccan ambassador to Queen Elizabeth in the *Norton Shakespeare* (Greenblatt 1997:2092).[32]

Furthermore, *tawny* and *black* are not systematically distributed, neither in Renaissance travel accounts, nor on the Elizabethan stage. Both terms, for example, are used virtually interchangeably in descriptions of the inhabitants of the Cape regions written between 1591 and 1603 (Merians 1998:128). The same applies to Shakespearean plays, in which *black* and *tawny* serve the same purpose of contrasting an idealised 'whiteness'. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Lysander mocks Hermia for her dark hair or sun-burnt skin with "Away, you Ethiope!" (3.2.258) at first, followed by "Out, tawny Tartar, out!" (3.2.264).[33] In the *Merchant of Venice*, the 'tawny' Prince of Morocco begs Portia: "Mislike me not for my complexion" (2.1.1), thus suggesting that his "shadowed livery" renders him just as unacceptable to Western aesthetic norms as someone of a darker hue. Similarly, Thomas Browne in what constitutes the most extensive discussion of skin colour before the Restoration mentions the expressions "so low a name as Tawny" and "so low as blacknesse" in one

[30] The phrase noble savage first appears in Dryden's *The Conquest of Granada*, Part 1 (1672), where the Moorish King Almanzor, on the point of being executed, voices his contempt of his Spanish captors with the words: "I alone am King of me. / I am as free as Nature first made man / 'Ere the base Laws of Servitude began / When wild in woods *the noble Savage* ran. (Swedenberg, Guffey and Dearing 1978:1.1.206-209, emphasis added). A comprehensive analysis of the stereotyping of the noble savage in text and art is provided by Kaufmann (1984).

[31] See e.g. Aphra Behn's Oronooko with his "nose […] rising and Roman, instead of African and flat" (Abrams 1993:1871), Robinson Crusoe's Friday, who has "all the Sweetness and Softness of an European in his Countenance" and whose nose is "not flat like the Negroes[']" (Shinagel 1994:148-49), Samuel Johnson's Rasselas, who is far more oriental than African, or the cultivated, 'olive-complexioned' Abyssinians Edward Gibbon pits against the savage, deformed sub-Saharan Africans in the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1788) (Smeaton 1910:4.42). There seems to be no comparable stereotype in anglophone discourse before the Restoration.

[32] Barbara Everett (1982) and Eric Griffin (1999) differ from such a view and argue that Elizabethan England shared much symphathy with North Africans. Barbara Everett believes that Elizabethan England represented "something of a political asylum for refugee Moors from Spain" (1982:104), and Eric Griffin claims that Protestant England and the Muslims of North Africa "s[aw] at least the potential for a holy league" against Catholic Spain, a political climate he sees reflected in the state visit of the Moroccan ambassador to Elizabeth I in 1600 (1998:73). However, in spite of these political rapprochements, it is cruical to draw attention to the mixed welcome the Moroccan embassy received on their prolonged six-month visit in 1600-01. According to the chronicler John Stow (writing in 1605), the Morroccans were commonly felt to be "rather espials than honourable ambassadors". Rumours spread that they were slaughtering animals indoors while turning towards the East. They were suspected to have poisoned their interpreters, and were criticised for their lack of charity towards the poor (Harris 1958:95). A similarly hostile attitude towards North Africa can be found in Samuel Purchas' condemnation of Barbary as the "Habitation of Sea-Devils", "the whip of the Christian World", the "Tortures[‘] centre" and "Hell upon Earth" (Tokson 1982:4).

[33] The best reading of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* within a colonial framework is offered by Kim F. Hall (1995:22-24, 85, 209, 230-32).

breath (1646:6.10.330). Thus, if there is any differentiation between *black* and *tawny*, as has been repeatedly maintained, such minute shades of meaning are swept away by the incomparably larger contrast towards European 'whiteness'.

Furthermore, in many instances where a modern reader would expect a 'tawny' Moor to appear, the actual character is a 'black' Moor instead. Traditionally, in medieval literature and mystery plays, Saracens and Moors are unanimously portrayed as being very dark-skinned in spite of their Mediterranean ethnicity. Examples include the 'Black Morocco Dog' of the Coventry cycle (Hunter 1967:186), the black 'Moriscoes' and 'Egipcians' in sixteenth-century pageantry (Jones 1965:28), or the "black Egyptian" in the 'Shakespeare apocrypha' *Edmund Ironside*.[34] Significantly, the earliest fully-fledged African character in English drama, Muly Hamet in George Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar* (c1588), a Moroccan fighting the Portuguese in 'Barbary', is also referred to as "the Negro Muly hamet" and as a "Negro Moore" (Jones 1965:43). Given this oscillation between 'tawny' North Africans and 'black' sub-Saharan Africans, it is not surprising that Othello should simultaneously embody a "Barbary horse" (1.1.113) *and* a "thick-lips" (1.1.66), or that he should possess an "Egyptian" handkerchief (3.4.56) while constantly being referred to as "black".

The usage of place names and ethnic labels, then, appears far less systematic and homogeneous than modern researchers have often assumed. Moreover, the Renaissance period does not share the same 'racial' divides with later periods. As Eric Griffin has appositely remarked, Elizabethans and Jacobeans did not "racializ[e] along precisely the same lines that Coleridge did or along the lines that individuals, subcultures, and national cultures do today" (1998:69), and this is one of the main difficulties in evaluating early modern colonial discourse. One pragmatic solution to this problem is to disregard shades of difference which appear insignificant, or which cannot be explained in any meaningful way.[35] Such a simplification, as rudimentary as seems, has the advantage of allowing the reader to redirect the focus of research away from a literal, structuralist study of the surface of texts to an analysis of those distinguishing traits which set it apart from the discourse on 'race' from later periods.

One of these characteristics is the blending of the past and the present. Just as Shakespeare's history plays are often equipped with a double setting, that is, medieval England and Elizabethan or Jacobean England, so too Shakespeare's African characters are situated in multiple historical and geographical realms. Aaron in *Titus Andronicus*, for instance, is both an African living among Goths in the late Roman empire as well as a representative of the West Africans coming into focus during the Renaissance. Similarly, Othello may on the surface stand for a Venetian-based 'Egyptian' or North

[34] Ule (1987:line 517). For a brief characterisation of *Edmund Ironside*, see Wells and Taylor (1987:138).
[35] Winthrop Jordan, for instance, believes that one should simply ignore the variations between different ethnic labels which Renaissance discourse often lumps together. According to Jordan, "the peoples of northern Africa seemed so dark that they [Elizabethan playwrights] tended to call them 'black' and let further refinements go by the board" (Jordan 1968:5).

African, as Everett (1982) and Griffin (1998) have recently claimed. At the same time, the obscene verbiage volleyed at "his Moorship" (1.1.32) also identifies him with the 'Moors shipped' over the Atlantic from the 16th century onwards. Thus, in opposition to Elizabethan travellers, who rediscover the past in the present, Shakespeare and other playwrights often read the present into the past, and project colonial settings onto European (con)texts.

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By the early 21st century, the myth that humankind can be scientifically categorised into races has been irreversibly swept away by revolutionary insights into human genetics. Since the human genome, which determines physiognomy and skin colour, is distributed in a far more complex manner than 18th and 19th century anthropologists presupposed, the very foundation upon which racial taxonomies used to be built has been irreversibly eroded.[36] At the same time, and this is no contradiction at all, publications on the historiography of the making of 'race' in Western thought have been soaring as never before. Since the ghosts of the past have not been completely exorcised, self-proclaimed "race critics" (Collins 1996:87) have taken it upon themselves to expose the utterly arbitrary and criminal ways in which certain ethnic groups have been discriminated, persecuted, exiled, enslaved and annihilated on the grounds of an allegedly different 'racial origin'.

Most of these studies employ the term *race* in a double sense, that is, both for the prejudice harboured against some ethnicities as well as for the crude 'rationale' fuelling and authorising racial bias, mostly under the guise of pseudo-scientific evidence.[37] In Postcolonial criticism, *race* is usually defined in a very broad sense, as with Bill Ashcroft et al. (1998):

> 'Race' is a term for the classification of human beings into physically, biologically and genetically distinct groups. The notion of race assumes, firstly, that humanity is divided into unchanging natural types, recognizable by physical features that are transmitted 'through the blood' and permit distinctions to be made between 'pure' and 'mixed' races. Furthermore, the term implies that the mental and moral behaviour of human beings, as well as individual personality, ideas and capacities, can be related to racial origin, and that knowledge of that origin provides a satisfactory account of the behaviour. (1998:198)

Strikingly, in their definition of 'race', Ashcroft et al. fail to mention one key aspect which 'racism' is bound to evoke in a modern context, namely colour. This omission is by no means accidental, but constitutes a conscious attempt to broaden the scope of studies on 'race' by allowing for comparative readings of cultures which have been othered in similar ways at different points in time. Indeed, for Ashcroft et al., "[t]he usefulness of the concept of race" lies in being able to document how an imperial culture "lump[s] together the 'inferior' races under its control" (1998:202-03). In the case of

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[36] See Montagu (1974:64-73), Hudson (1996:259), Parker and Song (2001:4). Although inadequacies of the 'scientific' foundations of *race* were voiced as early as in the 1930s (see e.g. "The Delusion of Race" in the April 18th issue of *Nature* 137 (1936):635-37), the breakthrough in the understanding of *race* as a social, cultural and political construct seems to have occurred only towards the end of the 20th century.

[37] Some studies differentiate between *race prejudice* (the 'phenomenon') and *racism* (the 'rationale') (Vaughan 1995:ix).

England or Britain, Ashcroft et al. are interested in unearthing parallels between for example the colonising of Africans and the subjugation of the 'wild' Irish, whose 'Africanoid' features in 17th to 19th century iconography show them to be victims of a similar process of othering.[38]

Given that racism still represents a major source of concern in many parts of the world today, any effort to expose the destructive forces propelling beliefs in 'race', "man's most dangerous myth", is surely worth commending.[39] However, as the novelty of studies unveiling imperial ideology begin to wear off, the shortcomings of such an approach gradually shine through. Many studies risk to misrepresent complex historical developments by settling for sweeping generalisations, and by constructing dehistoricised, and therefore nonsensical, analogies. Moreover, one pitfall enticing many to pursue an anachronistic line of enquiry has been the indiscriminate use of the loaded term *race* itself. Such a usage is problematic since it prioritises the reading of present concerns into the past over an understanding of historical discourse on 'race' within its own cultural matrix. What many eloquent readings 'past the post' verbosely attempt to shortcut is a meticulous study of the epistemological foundations upon which 'racial' stereotypes are based. However, if one aims at decoding the seemingly complex (for unfamiliar) early modern codes of otherness, a thorough understanding of the making of these 'racial' epistemes is indispensable.

Since the publication of historical monolithic landmarks by Eldred Jones (1965), Winthrop Jordan (1968) or Frank M. Snowden (1970), researchers have accumulated a wealth of varied, and often mutually conflicting evidence which precludes any simplistic generalisations on early modern attitudes to 'race'. Even though colour prejudice may be easily traced back from the Renaissance to ancient Egypt, there is likewise a lesser-known, parallel tradition challenging such bias, which is e.g. embodied in Homer's description of 'blameless Ethiopians', in Hellenistic sculpture, in the medieval veneration of Saint Maurice, in Albrecht Dürer's thoughtful portraits of African slaves, or in Richard Jobson's favourable description of Gambians in West Africa.[40] While there is no denying that of these two parallel traditions the more hostile view often prevails, lending one's ear to this dominating discourse eclipses important exceptions to the rule, and fails to pay tribute to the more subtle criticism of such views offered in multifaceted texts such as *Othello* or *The Tempest*.

A satisfactorily historicised understanding of 'race' which goes beyond the standard résumés will also need to take into consideration seemingly minor shifts in 'racial' attitudes between different

[38] See the remarks on the Irish / African analogy in Boose (1994:36-37), and the "Irish" readings of *The Tempest* in Baker (1997), Callaghan (2000:97-138) and Burnett (2002). Parallels between early 17th century descriptions of the Irish and the inhabitants of the Cape region are further discussed by Merians (1998:130-32).

[39] The expression is borrowed from Ashley F.M. Montagu's influential *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race* (1942), which has been in print for an incredible 60 years.

[40] See the *Iliad* (I.423-425, III.3-6, XXIII.205-207) and *Odyssey* (I.22-25, IV.84-89, V.283), best discussed in Romm (1992:49-67), Bugner's (1979) chapters on Hellenism (1.187-211) and St Maurice (2.1.149-205), Dürer's "Portrait of a black man" (1508) and his "Portrait of Katharina" (1521) (Bugner 1979:2.2.Figs. 263-64), and Jobson (1623) as discussed in Hair (1999:51-52, 61-63).

time periods, such as the one Kim F. Hall (1995) perceives between the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I. According to Hall, the cult of Elizabeth celebrated the purity of England's budding nation by fetishising the unconquered, chaste queen, whereas the Scotsman James not only wed his kin and country to foreign lands, but likewise ushered in Scottish cults of celebrating the exotic in courtly ceremonies. Whereas Elizabeth tolerated and secretly funded England's first sporadic slave raids (Kelsey 2003:18), and repeatedly ordered the expulsion of "the great number of Negroes and blackamoors […] who are fostered and powered here, to the great annoyance of her own liege people",[41] James I repatriated those self-same 'Moors' in body and image, i.e. through intensified colonial trade as well as by commissioning pageants such as Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blackness* (1605). While still James VI of Scotland, James had already delighted in making "four young Negroes dance in the snow in front of the royal carriage" at his wedding ceremony to Princess Anne of Denmark. The grand spectacle was apparently well-received among those thus entertained, yet turned out to be lethal to the unfortunate dancers themselves, who contracted pneumonia from the intense cold (Hall 1995:128). This contrast between an Elizabethan exiling or silencing of colour and a Jacobean exhibiting or domesticating of the exotic greatly complicates the historicising of works situated on the historical divide of 1603, such as Shakespeare *Othello*, which was first put on stage in the self-same year.[42]

In view of the epistemological discord resulting from rivalling traditions and historical change, many of the sweeping generalisations about British "racialist ideology […] evolv[ing] under the pressures of nascent imperialism" (Neill 1989:394) appear very limiting, especially if marred by factual error.[43] Emphasising how an Aristotelian condemnation of 'corrupted' physiognomies, coupled with an instinctive rejection of visual otherness by the insular British has bred and intensified colour bias for centuries fails to acknowledge the very real possibility of a critical reception (or an 'Augustinian' critique) of such rhetoric at various points in time.[44] Due to their narrow perspective, studies comparing the othering of "Africans and Celts, Jews and the 'wild Irish'" (Callaghan 1994:165) often silence such critical texts, and run the risk of revealing more about the ideological preconceptions underlying such scholarship than about the early modern period itself.

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[41] From the proclamation "Licensing Casper van Senden to Deport Negroes" (c. January 1601), which is preceded by earlier orders from 18 July 1596 and from 26 October 1600 to the same purpose (Hughes and Larkin 1969:3.221-222). A facsimile reprint of the draft is reproduced in Eldred Jones (1965:pl.5).

[42] This historical caesura has been most recently capitalised on in Christopher Lee's rather shallow *1603: A Turning Point in British History* (2003).

[43] See e.g. Linda E. Boose's brilliant article on the "Getting of a Lawfull Race", which erroneously claims that Britain continued slave trading "for several centuries" after other European nations had abolished it (1994:36). In fact, Britain was the first major European power to abolish the trade in 1807, together with the United States.

[44] Aristotle's *Physignomy* entered the English tradition in medieval times, known under the title *Secreta Secretorum*. On the Augustinian belief that the form of the body does not offer a clue to the quality of the soul, see Courtès (1979:2.1.13) and Friedman (1981:93). Consider also Augustine's memorable comment on Psalm 73 in his *Ennarrationes in Psalmos*: "[A]ll nations are Ethiopians, black in their natural sinfulness; but they may become white in the knowledge of the Lord" (Hunter 1985:196). Augustine's metaphor is possibly borrowed from Origen, who asserts that "if we remain unrepentant, we are like the Ethiopian – i.e., black and sinful – in our souls" (Kelly 2000:179).

Another difficulty regularly overlooked in mushrooming publications on 'Shakespeare and Race' is the excessive, uncritical usage of the term *race* itself, a trend also epitomized in Mythili Kaul's preface to *Othello: New Essays by Black Writers* (1997):

> The major theme of this anthology is, of course, race and racism in *Othello*. This fact should not, however, obscure the diversity of the essays included in it. For instance, on the critical question whether *Othello* is a racist play or a play *about* racism, opinion is almost equally divided between those contributors who see it as a racist play, written by a racist playwright, for a racist audience, and those who see it as a play *about* racism, with Iago (and not the playwright or the play itself) as the embodiment of racist attitudes. (Preface x)

Kaul's mantra-like repetition of the notorious four-letter word and its related forms leaves the reader wondering how much will be talked about Othello's 'race', about 'racists' and 'racisms', and how much about *Othello* the play. By limiting the role of the 'black scholar' to a researcher on 'race', Kaul constructs a highly dangerous identification between critic and text which effectively excludes the 'white' researcher from thoroughly understanding 'black' Shakespeare. Blinded by an inflationary use of *race* in a highly ideologised field, critics like Kaul have sorely neglected to scrutinise the Renaissance understanding of their core term, leaving it a strikingly "under-theorized [and one should add 'under-historicised'] epistemological category" (Hendricks 2000:690), especially if compared to the well-researched racial concepts developing in the 18th and 19th centuries.[45] A refreshing change to the 'racialising' of Renaissance historiography and literary criticism is offered by Margo Hendricks (2000), whose discussion of the term *race* will serve as the basis for the following deliberations.

In early modern text, *race* bears very different and much more varied connotations than in modern usage. Entering the English language in the early 16th century as a loanword from Portuguese (*raça*), or possibly via Spanish (*raza*),[46] the term is of "extraordinary semiotic malleability" and virtually "mean[s] whatever a [writer] wants it to mean" (Hendricks 2000:690). In Renaissance discourse, it remains a thoroughly neutral expression for categorising all sorts of plants, animals and human beings, and even inanimate substances. One finds references to Adam's race, to the Israelite race, to divine and heavenly races, to the race of womankind, to the baptized and to the ungodly race, to races of kings, nobles, and bishops, to the race of freed slaves, to London's race, to races of birds and wine, and even to a mythical 'one-eared' races.[47] Among this plethora of races, some sporadic, though by no means more prominent, references to national races (such as a *German*, *Hungarian* or *English* race) also occur. Conspicuously absent from Early Modern speech is the notorious 18th and 19th-century meaning which the *OED* euphemistically circumscribes as "the great divisions of mankind, having certain physical peculiarities in common" (*OED* "race", 2d). A glance at Shakespearean usages of the term roughly reveals the same picture. *Race* mostly denotes 'dynasty',

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[45] See e.g. the bulk of material just recently made available in two impressive series edited by Robert Bernasconi, entitled *Concepts of Race in the Eighteenth Century* (8 vols., 2001) and *Race and Anthropology* (9 vols., 2003).

[46] The earliest known usage is still in the poetry of the Scotsman William Dunbar published at his death (c. 1516), also quoted in the *OED* ("race" II.8a). On the Mediterranean origin of the term *race*, see also the reflections by Audrey Smedley (1993:36-40).

[47] *OED* "race", n. (2). Bizarrely, this last reference to "one-eared races" flatly contradicts Robert Miles' unsuspecting conjecture that the discourse of race always speaks in terms of "either 'black' or 'white' but never 'big-eared' and 'small-eared'" (Loomba 2000:204).

'lineage' or 'ancestry'. Merely in three cases does it convey the meaning of an inherited 'natural disposition', and the only such instance coming close to a post-Enlightenment understanding of the term, Prospero's condemnation of Caliban's "vile race" (*TMP* 1.2.361), clearly refers to an "individual moral incorrigibility" conferred upon Caliban by his parents rather than a universal disposition "shared with a whole people" (Appiah 1996:279).

As will have become obvious from the foregoing discussion, the early modern period does not know any theoretical framework comparable to these 18th and 19th century theories of 'race'. It is indeed telling that studies arguing for the presence of modern concepts of 'race' in Renaissance thought have been forced to resort to rather speculative wordings in order to disguise an arresting lack of evidence. Lynda E. Boose, for instance, writes that "race […] was an order *that was quite probably just on the horizon* by the end of the sixteenth century, *just beginning* to displace the notion of divine necessity as antecendent rationale for principles of difference" (1994:37, emphasis mine), without offering any further evidence supporting such a claim.

Renaissance thinkers and 18th and 19th century anthropologists also start from fundamentally different positions, since they embrace a predominantly spiritual and a secular view, respectively. Whereas 'modern' racism assumes that various strands of ethnic groups must have stemmed from different origins, evolving largely independently, the concept of such a polygenist, disunited creation is precisely what Renaissance thinkers are never allowed to contemplate. Before the late 18th century, no-one questions with impunity the authority of Genesis as a faithful chronicle of the making and of the dispersal of humankind. Attempts to opt out of this monogenetic framework constitute heresy, and are never seriously contemplated until the Enlightenment. One text often wrongly suspected of propagating polygenism is Paracelsus' *De generatione hominis* (1520) (Banton 1998:17), a text which, however, merely reiterates the conventional separation of the human from monstrous creatures, such as *monoculi* and *cyclopes*. One of the earliest thinkers to suggest a non-Adamite origin for Africans is Giordano Bruno, who in 1591 (one year before being tried by the Inquisition) declared the African slaves in the city of Naples to be a bunch of villains related to apes, but not to the ancient Jews (Jordan 1968:12). Bearing in mind the notoriety Bruni acquired when staying in Oxford in the 1580s, it seems highly unlikely that his thoughts on the subject should have made any inroads into Elizabethan or Jacobean England.[48]

The fact that the Renaissance prohibits notions of polygenesis becomes a dire predicament for the scientific analysis of differences in human colour and physiognomy, and distinguishes Judeo-Christian thought from other traditions which do not derive humankind from one sole pedigree (Friedman 1981:89). If some nations have strayed this far from the 'white image of God in man', early

[48] An extensive discussion of polygenism in Renaissance and 17th century England is offered by Gliozzi (1977:347-56, 565-621). Further starting points for researching pre-Adamites are offered by Cohen (1980:12).

modern anthropologists assume, they must have been separated from the 'chosen people' by certain processes not further specified in the scriptures. The proposed 'amendments' filling these 'lacunae' in Genesis are various narratives of fall and decay: myths of disease, of a biblical curse, or of monstrosity gendered through the female imagination.[49]

The shift from a monogenetic to a polygenetic paradigm in the 18th and 19th century has repeatedly been viewed as affecting the overall assessment of non-European, and particularly African, ethnicities. Such a theory is proposed most forcefully by Stephen Jay Gould, who distinguishes between the 'softer argument' of monogenism (also called "degenerationism") and the 'harder' one of polygenism (1996:71).[50] However, the vilifying and enslaving of the African does not seem to have been constrained by any teleological view, nor was the new polygenetic concept of 'race' originally tailored to serve a tool for vindicating slavery and imperialism. The abolitionist movement, too, strongly believed in 'racist' concepts, and some self-declared abolitionists actually opposed slavery even though considering Africans an inferior race (Hudson 1996:251). When the 19th century French anatomist Etienne Serres accuses the "savage theory" of polygenism of "lend[ing] support to the enslavement of races *less advanced in civilization than the Caucasian*" (Gould 1996:72, emphasis mine), he certainly does not espouse an egalitarian view of different 'races', but merely pleads for a more moderate form of social discrimination. Thus, to argue that the separation of anthropology and theology paved the way for theories of racial inferiority (Carretta and Gould 2001:5) appears somewhat simplistic and misleading,

If Renaissance monogenism and 19th century polygenism are contrasted within the present discussion, this is not to weigh different time periods against each other, but to sketch out the metaphysical foundation upon which early modern colonialist discourse ultimately rests. That such a task has long been overdue within Renaissance studies becomes clear if one considers the claim by Thomas F. Gossett, to which many researchers would still subscribe today, that "there was a minimum of theory [on foreign nations] at the time the institution [of slavery] was established" (1963:29). Gosset is certainly right to note an absence of any explicit racial classification comparable to late 18th and 19th century anthropology. Then again, Gossett fails to consider less explicit forms in which such theories may be verbalised. As will be shown in the following sections, the Renaissance may not possess a 'rational' basis for subjugating certain ethnicities, yet it possesses a symbolic code teaching bias against cultural and somatic difference, which may be regarded as equivalent to a proto-theory of 'race'. Measured by its dissemination in anglophone culture, the symbolism of the spotted certainly

[49] The last-mentioned theory of 'maternal impression' is paramount, since it is the only narrative which simultaneously addresses two key concerns of the age, the issue of colour and "the getting of a lawful race" (*ANT* 3.13.107). However, to conclude that the writings by Ambroise Paré, Helkiah Crooke and others on this subject be regarded as the sole, 'formative' concept of 'race' in the Renaissance, as the feminist critic Margo Hendricks (2000:691) argues, appears rather limiting.

[50] See also the following statement by Benjamin Braude: "No matter how destructive European behavior was, it would have been even worse had the many conflicting visions of human origins – pre-Adamic, polygenetic, diabolic, or animal ancestry, for example – gained general acceptance" (1997:105).

proves as effective as the full-blown racial theories of the late 19th century, if not even surpassing them.

Having explained the ways in which Renaissance discourse on foreign nations differs from the 'racialising' of later periods, it remains to be decided to what extent the term *race* may be used as a meaningful category of analysis in a study on early modern discourse. As pointed out above, several studies by 'race critics' have avoided raising this question altogether. Others, reluctant to part with the term, steer a middle path by putting *race* into "appropriately-named 'scare-quotes'" (Hendricks 1994:1), thereby acknowledging the inaccuracy of the term on a literal level while insisting that the age knew a bias akin to modern racist attitudes (Callaghan 1994:165). As the preceding elaborations have shown, such a view is certainly tenable, especially since the rhetorical and physical abuse of Africans touches similar lows across the centuries, regardless of whether or not it is sustained by a unified or 'scientific' rationale. However, for a study intending to close-read Renaissance epistemology and language, utilising a term which is prone to elicit anachronistic associations will not truly further the understanding of text, and appears unnecessarily misleading. In that sense, I fully sympathise with Benjamin Braude's view that it is preferable to access Renaissance attitudes via their own legacy rather than via "notions of racial distinctiveness dragged backward from our era" (Braude 1997:105).[51]

Without wanting to undermine the seriousness of 'race' as an issue in either past or present, I prefer to adhere to the more neutral, and in my view more functional, terminology employed by scholars such as G.K. Hunter (1967) or Lloyd Thompson (1989), who speak of *colour prejudice* or *colour bias* instead of *racism*, of *colour difference* or *somatic difference* instead of *race*, and of *ethnicities* or *nations* rather than of *races.*[52] From my point of view, the populist usage of the terms *black* and *blackness*, too, can be problematic for a study like this, simply because the labelling of Africans as 'blacks' only arises during the Renaissance (see the medieval 'blueman'!), and should thus represent an object of enquiry rather than a supposedly 'natural' epithet disposed of at will. In order to avoid an unnecessary blurring of critical commentary and source material, I shall refrain from using

[51] A very different view on this point is expressed by Kim F. Hall in her passionate call for "antiracist criticism and politically forceful pedagogy". Concerned that abjuring the term *race* is equal to a tendency of "not think[ing] about race either in Renaissance texts or in our classrooms", she questions why "a 'pure' category of race" should be necessary if, as New Historicism teaches us, "we as critics are embedded in our own historical moment and therefore do not have access to a pure history" (1995:259). Although Hall's compelling plea for a critical category *race* is partly validated by her own excellent work, her view that critics who question the use of 'race' automatically mount "an ideological defense against seeing systemic injustices in past societies" fails to take into consideration the possibility that dismissing the term *race* may actually further the understanding of how colour prejudice is constructed in early modern texts.

[52] See also Peter Erickson (1998), who shares the same reservations towards relying on an ahistorical concept of *race*. However, Erickson hesistates to opt for the alternative term *ethnicity* on the grounds that such a switch may run "the risk that the specific prominence and pressures of strongly marked black-white color lines are minimized or lost" (31).

the term *black* and instead operate with strictly geographical terms (*African*, *Asian*, *Native American*, *non-European*).[53]

To close the foregoing exposé of terminologies of skin colour, this study may be described as a reading of 'racism without race' in a literal sense. It builds on the conviction that anachronistic notions of *race* and *racism* must be abandoned in favour of a more soundly historicised view of colour prejudice in order to explain the images of disease, deformity and impurity permeating texts such as *Titus Andronicus*, *Othello* or *The Tempest*. Among those images re-occurring time and again in these sources are descriptions of non-Europeans (and Africans in particular) as 'spotted' creatures, that is, humans characterised by physical deformity, moral corruption and mental decay. This symbolism of this 'spotting' or 'staining' of ethnic otherness in early modern discourse constitutes the focal point of this thesis.

[53] Compare again the different opinion expressed by Kim F. Hall, who considers replacing *black* with *African* as unprofitable if not problematic since *Africa*, which, "as we see it in modern cartography, did not exist for writers" of the early modern period (1995:8). In answer to Hall's objection, it should be borne in mind that, although *Africa* is no more 'historical' than *black* (see Appendix 1), it certainly represents an apt choice, in the sense that it is the most explicit expression available. When from the 16th to the late 19th century the vast unknown interior (or Greek *aithiopia*) is gradually being dis-covered, chartered, appropriated and colonised by Western powers, this 're-ordered' continent receives the very name which its first Western colonisers, the Romans, used for the occupied territories on the southern Mediterranean shore, namely *Africa*.

Figure 3. Parzival (left) fencing with Feirefitz (right).
Illustration of *Parzival* (c1204) from MS Cgm19 (mid-13th c.)
at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München

The Code of the Spotted

They say [y]ou are a spot among Christians (Bunyan. *Pilgrim's Progress*)
(Keeble 1966:1.69)

The mid-13th century manuscript illustration of Parzival engaging in battle with Feirefitz (Fig. 3) is remarkable for the way in which Parzival's half-brother is depicted. As the son of Gahmuret, Parzival's father, and Belakane, a dark-skinned queen of an Eastern country, Feirefitz is 'neither black nor white yet both' (Sollors 1997), as his name, derived from French *vaire-fils* (i.e. 'pied son') indicates (de Weever 1998:78). In order to do justice to the text, which repeatedly describes Feirefitz as bearing a 'magpie-like' complexion, medieval illustrators either portray him as a Janus-faced figure, with a black and a white cheek, or, as in the illustration above, as a spotted creature, with speckled legs shining forth from underneath his armour.[54] Regardless of how such 'pied' skin is visualised, the character of Feirefitz bears testimony to a medieval understanding which markedly differs from early modern attitudes towards such 'half-castes'. Whereas medieval discourse primarily problematises an inter*cultural* hybridity, and utilises the body as a marker for problematising such a status, Renaissance discourse foregrounds hybrid bodies for their own sake, prioritising the physical over the spiritual.

In *Parzival*, Feirefitz' piebald complexion does not raise the issue of the 'colour line' as we know it from later periods, but symbolises the religious divide separating his Frankish father from his Muslim mother. A similar symbol of a body torn between two faiths occurs in an anonymous Middle English romance entitled the *King of Tars* (c1280), in which the 'heathen' King of Tars (or Tartars)[55] and his Christian wife engender not a proper child, but a shapeless lump of flesh without face or limbs (Perryman 1980:lines 577-88). In the latter narrative, colour and monstrosity are expunged by the sacrament of baptism, which cleanses the King of Tars (notice the pun on 'tar'!) of his dark hue, and transforms the 'misshapen thing' into a shapely white boy (Perryman 1980:lines 769-92, 925-36). In *Parzival*, Feirefitz keeps the mottled colour he is born with, yet undergoes a spiritual 'washing'. Having become Parzival's trusted friend after the miraculous discovery of their kinship, baptism transforms Feirefitz into a fully-fledged knight entitled to wed Lady Pelrapeire ('belle repair' (!)), and capable of seeing the holy grail (Lachmann and Spiewok 1981:16.816-18). Fully restored as Parzival's equal, Feirefitz finally becomes a missionary in the East, and father to the famous Prester John in India

[54] See *Parzival* 1.57.15-18, 1.157.27-28, 15.747.27, 15.748.7, 15.758.2, 15.758.17-19. A Janus-faced Feirefitz appears in the Bern codex (1467) reproduced in Sollors (1997:42), whose title *Neither black nor white yet both* is alluded to here. Another spotted Feirefitz occurs in the music hall of King Ludwig II's castle Neuschwanstein, which is dedicated to the mythical figures of Tannhäuser, Lohengrin and Parzival (http://www.hacom.nl/~detempel/ludwig/Muziekzaal/Parzival2516.html). I would like to thank Hans-Joergen Brusevold for pointing this out.

[55] Judith Perryman (1980:47-48) suggests three possible reference points to *Tars*: (1) Tartars, (2) Tarsus, the port in Armenia Minor, or (3) Tharsia, located by Mandeville roughly in present-day Turkestan, yet adds that since during the 13th century all these areas were dominated by the Mongols, the dispute is a minor matter. Given the foregrounding of colour in the romance, the 'King of Tars' should of course also be read as 'King of the tar-faced' (cf. *OED* "tar" n.).

(Lachmann and Spiewok 1981:16.822.23-30). His speckled hue, therefore, very much prefigures his destiny as a missionary of Western and Christian values outside Europe.[56]

This narrative of the non-European being cleansed of spiritual impurity is precisely what early modern colonial discourse constantly denies. In contrast to medieval tales of reunification in the faith, Renaissance texts repeatedly teach the impossibility of crossing cultural boundaries, and insist that 'one cannot wash the Ethiope white'.[57] No longer an indicator of religious affiliation, colour is secularised and problematised as an aesthetic and scientific conundrum which perplexes and terrifies. The spiritual washing so central to medieval narratives is erased, both in text and in deed. Just as the Ethiopian Eunuch baptised in Acts 8:27-39 is often silenced or re-defined as a European in text and image,[58] precious little effort is made on behalf of the English to proselytise the Africans they encounter, an attitude which starkly contrasts with e.g. Portuguese missionary activities in Africa, or with English designs to convert Native Americans.[59] If the scripture retains any relevance within the Anglo-African encounter, it is almost exclusively to provide authoritative pretexts for vindicating colonial subjugation. Biblical symbols (such as the unchangeable Ethiopian (Jer 13:23)) and symbolic acts (such as Noah's curse' (Gen 9:20-27)) are readily exploited in readings which emanate from an oral tradition of prejudice rather than from exegesis or from a spiritual tradition.[60] If the medieval encounter with the Saracen ultimately stems from the desire to live and recover spiritual text outside of Europe, the early modern vilification of the unchangeable Ethiopian represents a move in exactly the opposite direction, being a frantic attempt to exclude the foreigner from 'seizing the book'.

Next to spiritual redemption, Feirefitz also stands for successful acculturation. Born to an 'Oriental' mother recklessly abandoned by her Frankish knight, Feirefitz inherits all the virtues of his father. As an errant knight, he abandons his native East, and leaves behind his entire cultural legacy in order to fulfil the highest chivalric aspirations by winning the heart of a courtly lady and gaining access to the grail. Feirefitz thus very much appears as the male counterpart to what Jacqueline de Weever calls the prototypical "enamoured Muslim Princess", i.e. the Saracen woman who falls in love

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[56] In the illustrations of Cgm 19 following the one reprinted above, Feirefitz is no longer represented as spotted, but as sharing the same skin colour as the Franks surrounding him, thus foreshadowing his baptism depicted in the final illustration (Dressler 1970:30).

[57] The significance of this proverb for the making of early modern discourse is discussed extensively in the opening to the chapter "The Leper".

[58] For examples of a Europeanised Eunuch, see Thomas More's *Confutation of Tyndale's Answer* (1532) (Schuster and Marius 1973:8.888-889), Calvin's *Commentaries upon the Actes of the Apostles* (Tymme 1578), Melchior Küsel's emblem book (1679:21), or a 17th century engraving by Michel Lasne after Aubin Vouet (Massing 1995:Fig. 62).

[59] See Jordan (1968:21): "[I]t is almost startling that Englishmen failed to respond to the discovery of heathenism in Africa with at least the rudiments of a campaign for conversion. […] [T]he well-publicized English program for converting Indians produced meager results, but the avowed intentions certainly were genuine. It was in marked contrast, therefore, that Englishmen did not avow similar intentions concerning Africans until the late eighteenth century." On missionary programmes by Puritans directed at Native Americans, see Simmons (1999) and Van Lonkhuyzen (1999). On the history of Portuguese missionary activity in the dioceses of São Tomé (Lower Guinea), Santiago (Upper Guinea), São Salvador (Congo and Angola) and Goa (including East Africa), see Kenny (1982).

[60] That exegetes contribute little to the prevailing stereotypes of Africans in the Renaissance period is mirrored by the fact that apart from the figures mentioned above (Ham, the unchangeable Ethiopian, and the Ethiopian Eunuch), the numerous biblical passages involving Africans or 'Cushites' are virtually never discussed in Renaissance debates on the subject.

with a foreign knight and leaves (and possibly even betrays) her family, faith and culture in order to embrace Western values and the Christian faith (2000:377).[61] Feirefitz' destiny to attain 'white' or Christian values is already foretold in two incidents, first when his mother kisses only the white spots on his skin (*Parzival* 1.57.19-20), and once again when Feirefitz' passion for his lady makes him blush on the self-same white patches (16.810.29-30). As a hybrid whose white 'imprints' enable him to attain a 'white' status, Feirefitz is the precise opposite of numerous Renaissance hybrids who 'will not take the prints of goodness'. Caliban, for example, the 'freckled whelp' – like Feirefitz a spotted 'bastard' – remains in Prospero's eyes the archetypal villain upon whose nature nurture will not stick. Given this 'evil' disposition which many Renaissance texts project onto the 'misshapen' non-European body, the 'civilising' of the African and his spiritual conversion are overwhelmingly dismissed as 'labour in vain'.[62]

However, there is one further major difference which distinguishes medieval and Renaissance discourse on the exotic, namely their attitudes to gender. Whereas the medieval romance often portrays the Saracen princess as a primary site of conquest, the Renaissance is well-known for its mysterious silencing of the African woman (Boose 1994). It seems more than sheer coincidence that all Shakespearean African characters on stage are male, whereas the corresponding African mothers, wives and mistresses are systematically moved offstage.[63] Also among Shakespeare's contemporaries, stage appearances of African women remain marginal, and are mostly limited to minor roles, such as Zanche in Webster's *The White Devil* (Boose 1994:47)**,** a trend which continues long into the Restoration period (Macdonald 1999:71).

While earlier studies such as Elliot H. Tokson's *Popular Image of the Black Man* [sic!] *in English Drama* (1982) seem to have taken little note of this fact,[64] more recent studies have repeatedly addressed the issue of gender imbalance, explaining it mainly along two different lines. The silencing of the African female is either believed to constitute a conscious move to obscure fundamental internal contradictions inherent in white, male epistemology, or it is regarded as being motivated by a desire to conceal a disturbing social reality prevailing in colonial settings. Once the Virginia colony has been firmly established by the mid-17th century, relationships between 'white' masters and non-European mistresses are in much greater need of being negated than sexual liaisons between 'white' mistresses and non-European males. Whereas reports of English wives dallying with their servants are readily

[61] For an exhaustive analysis of narratives on Saracen women in medieval romance, see De Weever (1998).
[62] Notice Winthrop Jordan's observation that Englishmen viewed African 'heathenism' not so much as a religious as a cultural deficiency: "Heathenism was treated not so much as a specifically religious defect but as one manifestation of a general refusal to measure up to proper standards, as a failure to be English or even civilized" (1968:24).
[63] Compare the male Africans on stage (Aaron, Othello, Caliban, the Prince of Morocco in *The Merchant of Venice*) to the female African characters offstage (Othello's mother, Sycorax, the pregnant "Negro" in *The Merchant of Venice* (3.5.32)).
[64] Unfortunately, Tokson fails to comment on how the male element in his title, *The Black Man in English Drama*, ought to be read. His choice seems stranger still due to the fact that he actually discusses several female African figures in Early Modern literature, such as the unnamed 'black maids' in 17th century poetry, John Webster's Zanche, Launcelot's unnamed mistress' in *MV*, the loose woman called Nigrinia satirized by Edward Guilpin (*Skealethia* 1598), or Shakespeare's Cleopatra (see the list of African characters in Tokson's Appendix 1).

exploited in modifications of the 'black' rapist myth, which perfectly lends itself to vindicating various forms of colonial oppression, news of affairs between masters and their enslaved mistresses threaten to undermine the authority of an entire patriarchal system.

Furthermore, already before the institutionalising and codifying of slavery in English colonies, there is a need to suppress memories of the 'non-white' woman, on epistemological grounds. Since in interethnic offspring the 'blackness' in the female is seen as overpowering male 'whiteness', the 'non-white' woman directly challenges the myth of male gendering preserved in Aristotelian and in Judeo-Christian genealogy. Given this disturbing significance of colour in the female, Renaissance texts assume a radically different attitude towards the female African than medieval percursors, or than modern texts do.[65] Whereas medieval texts often simply negate the colour (synonymous with 'faith') of the forbidden Saracen body by depicting Saracen women as 'white',[66] Renaissance discourse – being unable to sustain such a myth – must deny the existence of the African woman entirely. These two different responses may also be read as symptomatic for the directions European expansion takes in these two periods. The Saracen woman, symbolising the riches of the East, is courted, conquered, acculturated and whitened to satisfy Western territorial desires. The female African of the early modern period is exploited more surreptitiously as the breeder of enslaved manpower. As such, she must be simultaneously eclipsed, negated, rejected and 'disowned', just like the 'illegitimate' offspring her masters beget on her body.[67]

In medieval texts, then, impurity is mainly of a spiritual kind which is only projected onto the body, whereas the English Renaissance regards colour as a source of impurity itself. Even more disturbingly, the marker of this impurity is not passed along patrilinear lines, as Aristotelian doctrine decrees, but via the 'black' mother. (Male) Renaissance discourse must therefore construct a language accommodating this highly disconcerting domination of colour by the African female. In contrast to a medieval discourse which chooses to define Feirefitz' self by his patches of whiteness (rather than by his 'blackness'), Renaissance writing fabricates an African ethnicity which can neither co-exist with, nor be subservient to, 'white' ethnicity, but which always acts as a corrupting, destructive force. For a

[65] On these grounds, I strongly disagree with Ania Loomba's claim that "rapes of black women by white men were seen as a sort of favour to the black race" in the early modern period (Loomba 1994:174).

[66] In medieval romance, the Saracen woman is often represented as white, as Jacqueline de Weever observes with reference to the French *Guillaume* cycle: "Orable's father Desramez is black, her brothers are black horrible giants; her cousin is a member of the cannibal races. Yet she is whiter than snow, and so on. The contradictions cry out for explanation." (1998:133). De Weever explains this whitening as an abhorrence of black on aesthetic grounds, as she stresses in her close-reading of the Song of Song's "I am black but beautiful" (x-xxxvii), but also an aversion to Christian-Muslim marriages in medieval Frankish culture, which stands e.g. in marked contrast to a greater acceptance of such unions in Moorish Spain (1998:41).

[67] In 1662, the Virginia colonial assembly overruled the common law principle that a child's status was determined by the father by replacing him with the mother (Macdonald 1999:73). In a colonial context, this move effectively meant that "slaves were bred through Blackwomen's bodies", a "form of exploitation of female slaves [whose economic significance] should not be underestimated" (Harris 1993:1719). A useful starting point for investigating the role of African female slaves 'as productive and reproductive property' is offered by Kathleen M. Brown (1996:128-36).

tradition insisting on the so-called 'one-drop rule',[68] any interethnic relation amounts to an encroaching of the 'black' upon the 'white'. This angst-ridden aversion to colour is not only reflected in the overturning of the legal principle of patrilinear descent in English colonies in order to safeguard the myth of male gendering. It also finds expression in a 'xenophobic' discourse which suspiciously views any interethnic rapprochement as a tainting and defiling of the European, and eventually results in legal statutes against so-called 'miscegenation' in the Restoration period.[69] While such discourse takes on various forms, one of the vehicles conveying the 'threatening' nature of the non-European body most forcefully, and most tenaciously, is the hitherto largely ignored symbol of the African as the spotted.

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Throughout Western art, there is a pronounced tendency of representing Africans in combination with spotted or variegated patterns. The range of such texts stretches from antiquity to the modern period, including Egyptian reliefs showing captured Nubians dressed in leopard skins (Lesêtre 1928:173-74) as well as 'social texts' such as the 19th century convention of dressing African servants in striped livery (Pastoureau 1995:77, 85). The topos appears particularly prominent on classical Greek pottery from the 5th and 4th centuries BC, which variously features Africans wearing striped or spotted dresses, carrying patterned shields, being seated on speckled boulders, or fighting spotted crocodiles.[70] The same theme pervades medieval and Renaissance art, where striped or spotted dress forms a common attribute of Africans from all social strata, no matter whether they be servants, musicians, captives or personages of royal blood (such as the Queen of Sheba, the bride of the *Song of Songs*, or one of the three Magi).[71] In the 18th and 19th centuries, we again find numerous examples of this formula cropping up, the most memorable one being Thomas Jones Barker's painting (c.1861) of Queen Victoria presenting a Bible to a kneeling, dark-skinned ruler wearing a leopard-skin cloak (Fig. 7).[72] Clearly, then, the striped and the spotted provide the favoured backdrop against which dark skin, and the African physique in particular, are depicted in a tradition permeating different time periods.

Michel Pastoureau, who has first drawn attention to this phenomenon, regards the patterns of stripes and spots as mutually exchangeable in terms of their symbolic meaning, and a cursory glance at

[68] As stated by Thomas Dixon: "[A] drop of Negro blood makes a Negro" (1902:382). On the emergence of the one-drop rule, see the excellent précis of the American legal concept of 'whiteness as property' by Cheryl I. Harris (1993:1740).
[69] In the 1630s and 1640s, members of English colonies in the Americas participating in interracial liaisons were subjected to severe public whippings and other humiliations (Sollors 1997:395-96, Moran 2001:19). Some historians have therefore claimed that the Restoration legislation against 'miscegenation' merely codified an earlier practice dating back to almost the beginnings of the Virginia colony. A concise account of the codification of general slave laws in the English colonies is offered by Blackburn (1997a:243-252).
[70] Snowden (1970), figures 16, 17, 26, 28, 33, 76, 80, 81, 90, 97; Snowden (1981), figures 7, 21.
[71] See Bugner 1979:2.1.97, 2.2.192, 197, 245 (servants), Bugner 1979:2.2.98 (musicians), Bugner 1979:2.2.123 (captives), Bugner 1979:2.2.Figs. 26, 42, 70, 138, 168, 173 (rulers and noblemen). For an example of Balthasar dressed in particoloured clothes, see the *Adoration of the Magi* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (Claessens 1979:Fig. 3).
[72] For further examples, see Bugner (1979:4.1.Figs. 3, 28, 35, 80, 81, 84, 85, 87, 91, 103, 112, 125, 133, 150, 188, 191).

Renaissance texts confirms his assumption. In medieval and early modern bestiaries, the fur patterns of leopards and tigers are often confused. Medieval bestiaries customarily depict tigers as spotted creatures, as does Sebastian Brant in one of the fables added to his edition of Aesop (1501) (Schneider 1999:349), and the same error is perpetuated in later 16th and 17th century works.[73] This overlapping of patterns suggests an affinity between spots and stripes which suggests that these 'impure' visual patterns ought to be studied comprehensively rather than in separation.

Figure 4. Late 5th c.-early 4th c. BC Kalyx-krater, showing a seated mulatto figure dressed in a heavily patterned costume (Snowden 1981:Fig.21)

Figure 5. Calendar, month of December. Psalter from the Abbey of Gellone, England (early 12th c.) (Bugner 1979:2.2.Fig.97)

Figure 6. Friedrich Herlin the Elder. *Adoration of the Magi* (c.1460). Altarpiece wing from the Church of St George (Bugner 1979:2.2.Fig.139)

Figure 7. Thomas Jones Barker. *Queen Victoria Presenting a Bible in the Audience Chamber at Windsor* (c.1861) (Bugner 1979:4.1.Fig.183)

[73] See the spotted tigers on the extraordinary, privately-run website *Bestiary:Animals in the Middle Ages* by David Badke (http://bestiary.ca/index.html), the spotted 'tigers' in Joannes Sambucus' emblem book published in Antwerp in 1564 (Henkel and Schöne 1967-76:402), or Hiob Ludolf's *Commentarius* to his *History of Ethiopia* (1691:149-50). Notice also that in early modern Spanish, *el tigre* could be used both for the tiger proper as well as for the jaguar (in the New World), a usage which seems to have spilled over into other European languages (Dittrich 2004:283).

In the Western tradition, these 'impure' visual patterns of the spotted and the striped also always evoke associations with the epistemological concept of the spot as a moral stain. In Latin, *macula* encodes both 'spot' and 'stain', as does the German noun *Fleck*, with its adjectival derivatives *gefleckt* ('spotted') and *beflecкt* ('stained').[74] In the English language, a similar *double entendre* characterises the adjective *spotted*, which may simultaneously stand for someone physically "disfigured or stained with spots", as well as for someone "[m]orally stained or blemished" (*OED* "spotted" 2a-b). Given the importance attached to *immaculate* Christ and Mary in the Christian faith, such a symbolism firmly establishes itself in Europe in the wake of its Christianisation, and is consolidated in the medieval period.[75] In the early modern period there is a significant broadening of the semantic field of the term, encompassing meanings as diverse as 'becoming soiled', 'tainted', 'tarnished', 'defiled', 'dishonoured', 'desecrated', 'infected' or 'transmitting disease' (Anderson 1989: "beflecken", "befleckung"). The reading of dots as an injurious adjunct emerges most clearly from the German expression *Schandfleck* ('spot of shame'), a compound alluding to various social practises of using spots and stripes to mark the outcast.[76] Similarly, another German compound, *verspotten* ('to ridicule'), points towards one particular form this discrimination against the outcast may take, i.e. by means of a mockery of those bearing such a visual mark.

In the light of Michel Pastoureau's reading of spots and stripes in Western iconography, the coinciding of the African with variegated patterns does not come as a surprise. As Pastoureau (1995) meticulously documents, stripes and spots are traditionally the attributes of those marginalised in society: musicians, fools, gamblers, rascals, sinners, prostitutes, executioners, criminals, convicts, and non-Europeans.[77] Building on the conventional representation of the enemies of Christendom as Jews, Orientals or Africans, medieval and Renaissance artists repeatedly depict the mockers of Christ and the torturers of saints as Africans in particoloured dress.[78] In effect, the two negations of 'whiteness', i.e. the spotted or the striped and the 'black', are merged in one comprehensive symbol of otherness. Being considered disquiet, disorderly and perturbing, multicoloured patterns attain a comparable status to *black* in the medieval period. They symbolise evil, lust and sin, the monstrous and the forbidden, an interpretation which may be related to the visual likeness of these patterns with hairiness, uncleanliness and symptoms of disease.

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[74] Consider the English cognates to German *Fleck*: *to fleck*, *to flecken*, *to fleckel*, *flecked*, and *fleckled* (see the corresponding *OED* entries).

[75] The expansion of the semantic field from the visual 'spot' to the metaphorical 'stain' is difficult to date. In German, the meanings of 'blemish' or 'fault' in *gefleckt* have been said to 'evolve naturally' in the Middle High German period (Spalding 1952: 810), yet they already occur in 10th century Old High German texts (*Althochdeutsches Wörterbuch* "fleckôn"), especially in transliterations of Latin texts.

[76] Notice that the German concept *Schandfleck* may be directly borrowed from bible translations of passages such as 2 Peter 2:13-14, which speak of sinners as "spots […] and blemishes […] that cannot cease from sin".

[77] Pastoureau's findings are corroborated and complemented by Mellinkoff (1993:5-31).

[78] See the betrayal and arrest of Christ, Sforza Hours, Milan (c1490) (Mellinkoff 1993:VIII.5), the mocking of Christ, Polychrome relief, Zurich (c1542) (Mellinkoff 1993:VIII.6), the flagellation of Christ in the *Luttrell Psalter* (14th c.) (Melinkoff 1993:I.43), the crucifixion in the Casanatense Missal, Netherlands (early 15th c.) (Mellinkoff 1993:VI.42), the imprisonment of John the Baptist in the Holham Bible (c1330) (Melinkoff 1993:I.32), the stoning of St Stephen in a late 13th century French manuscript (Mellinkoff 1993:I.12, and also Bugner 1979:2.1.76), and the martyrdom of St Mark by the Limbourg Brothers, France (before 1416) (Bugner 1979:2.2.Fig.103).

This reading of the multicoloured as a symbol of transgression also leads to the proclamation of medieval laws against wearing such clothing, culminating in a 25-year long trial on the subject of the striped habit of Carmelite monks in the 13th century.[79] What is deemed offensive with a religious order is, however, imposed by law upon those out-lawed from the community: Prostitutes, lepers, heretics, and sometimes Jews and non-Christians, too, are punished with wearing such patterned dress, a tradition surviving well into the 20th century (Pastoureau 1995:21). In Western discourse, then, spots and stripes constitute a powerful symbol which differentiates those transgressing social, political, spiritual and aesthetic boundaries by marking them as 'impure', unruly bodies.

The meaning attached to the symbolism of spots and stripes, however, is not monolithic, but undergoes change over time. From the 18th century onwards, stripes gradually become a fashionable symbol expressing revolution, daring, swiftness, progress, transition, sophistication, elegance and style in an iconographic discourse coexisting alongside the sinister meaning stripes attain under totalitarian regimes (Pastoureau 199:89-129). The Renaissance likewise possesses its very own, highly idiosyncratic, understanding of the topos. Among the meanings early modern culture attaches to the particoloured is first and foremost the concept of cultural and somatic hybridity. Secondly, the striped and the spotted also stand for various narratives mythologising the making of hybrid bodies (and the origin of colour) as unnatural bestial acts, as a dissemination of disease, or as a spread of moral decay and mental illness.

In numerous Renaissance texts, the particoloured is exploited as a symbol alluding to the crossing of the 'colour line'. As a symbol of danger, it feeds into a xenophobic discourse which forcefully denounces what is regarded as a disorderly, 'illicit' mingling of ethnicities, since the late 19th century labelled 'miscegenation'.[80] For an emerging naval and colonial power which – in contrast to Iberian nations – constructs its empire along the colour dichotomy,[81] the element threatening such 'order' most vigorously is the hybrid body transgressing this very boundary. The fear of the emergence of a "mongrel sect" between Africans and Englishmen, as Samuel Purchas calls it

[79] The arrival of Jerusalem-based Carmelites in France in 1254, accompanying Emperor Louis IX after the failed sixth crusade (1248), sparked a great controversy due to their clothing. After a quarter of a century of deliberations, the order finally surrendered and decided to replace their traditional dress with a plain white cloak in 1287, a decision supported by most yet not all members of the order (Pastoureau 1995:9-18).

[80] Literally 'the mixing of genera'. The term was coined by David Croly in his pamphlet *Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of the Races, Applied to the American White Man and Negro* (1864), which satirically asserts that "if any fact is well established in history, it is that the miscegenetic or mixed races are much superior, mentally, physically, and morally, to those pure or unmixed" (Paulin 2001:298). With the Civil War nearing its end, the concept reflects the glooming realisation that abolition in the South would become inevitable.

[81] It is important to stress that the anglophone hype about colour differs from other colonial traditions, such as the Portuguese, which by definition aims at creating a mixed society. In Portuguese East India, for instance, viceroy Alfonso de Albuquerque created in 1510 the status of the *casado* ('married man'), i.e. Portuguese settlers who were encouraged to intermarry with baptised local women, and whose offspring were Portuguese citizens of full right (Subrahmanyam 1993:219-22). To quote another example, the famous Ethio-Portuguese community living in the Horn of Africa, which after several generations of intermarriage with Ethiopians had physically become virtually indistinguishable from 'real' natives by the early 17th century, received in the 1630s still yearly funds from the Portuguese king in order to protect them and acknowledge them as his subjects (by personal communication from Andreu Martinez Alòs-Moner).

(Blackburn 1997a:221), is often expressed through characters embodying a monstrous hybrid state. Similarly to Wolfram von Eschenbach's Feirefitz, there are several examples of Renaissance hybrids who are conceptualised as particoloured creatures, such as Aaron's and Tamora's "spotted babe" in *Titus Andronicus*, or the "freckled whelp" Caliban in the *Tempest*, who is vilified for being *half*-devil and *half*-Sycorax. In this context, the spotted handkerchief in *Othello* may also be seen as an abstraction of the hybrid liaison between the 'griev'd Moor' and the 'spotless' Desdemona.

However, whereas in *Parzival* the coexistence of Christian whiteness and 'Oriental' darkness proves non-threatening and even enriching (in the sense that Feirefitz' hybrid birth ultimately enables him to function as a missionary of Christianity and chivalry to the East), Renaissance texts view the liminal status of interethnic hybrids as far more problematic. Hybridity is seen as a predicament which is aligned to unnaturalness, to monstrosity, and to physical and mental instability. Renaissance hybrids are figures whose double consciousness robs them of a clearly-defined identity. Even though most Renaissance hybrid figures, such as Caliban, often appear somewhat more constructed than based on an actual intercultural experience, the anxieties and concerns expressed in such discourse are only too real, and have a strong bearing on the ways in which an imagined empire of the Elizabethans and Jacobeans will be reinvented in the Americas.[82]

One metaphor powerfully driving home this fear of 'miscegenation', or of a defiling of 'whiteness', is borrowed from classical and medieval allegory. The leopard, and to some extent also the tiger, serve as symbols reconceptualising the supposedly 'lecherous' African as a beast. A second metaphor reinforcing these images is the interpretation of spottedness as a symptom of physical and mental disease. Indeed, several Renaissance texts speak of colour as a disease passed on through the sexual act. Colour is often likened to leprosy in order to justify segregation along the colour line as a necessary measure for preserving white 'health'. A third, and arguably the most powerful image of the three, conceives of spottedness as a sign encoding a moral fall. By rediscovering the African in such biblical archetypal sinners as Cain or Ham, Renaissance texts construct an analogy between physiognomy on the one hand and ineradicable spots of sin on the other. The African and the interethnic hybrid emerge not only as those bearing *Schandflecken*, or spots of shame, but also as humans who are systematically *verspottet* (i.e. ridiculed) and cursed for their allegedly 'corrupted', maculate skin. As shall be demonstrated in the following chapters, the multiple meanings of hybridity, bestiality, illness and mental or spiritual corruption do not coexist independently of each other, but coalesce in a symbolism of the spotted seeking to malign the African – and occasionally also other marginalised groups – as an unnatural, and hence impure and dangerous, breed. How this symbolism is constructed, disseminated and challenged constitutes the focal point of this thesis.

[82] On the delicate 'origins debate' on the roots of American colonial policy and racism, see Vaughan (1995). A highly suggestive solution on how to bridge the time gap between 'colonial' Elizabethan and Jacobean rhetoric and the establishment of the Virginia colony in the 1620s is provided by Erickson (2002), who sees slave ownership as foreshadowed by the circulation of Moors at European courts in the 16th and 17th centuries.

In terms of rhetorical power, symbolism as a form possesses several advantages over other kinds of discourse. Like a metaphor, it cannot contain literal truth, and does not need to become explicit. Like a catchphrase, it reduces complexity to simple 'kernels of truth'. And like a proverb, it is vested with multiple authorities: traditional, epistemological, and spiritual. Speaking only to the initiated, symbolism requires neither clarification nor validation of the allusions it makes. The form as such therefore seems predestined for spreading colour prejudice among those sharing cultural values and a 'common sense', especially for a period like the Renaissance, which is incapable of producing a coherent medical or scientific explanation of colour. Bearing in mind the linguistic instability and the manifold uncertainties haunting early modern scientific discourse, speaking in symbols appears as a highly successful strategy for popularising the idea of segregating the pure from the impure. Mysterious to the outsider yet irrefutable to the initiated, the symbolism of the African as the spotted represents a cultural code which through its own obscurity becomes all the more alluring. The power of exclusion emanating from this private myth comes perhaps most clearly to the fore in the late 18th century, when the first Africans start publishing in English. Authors such as Ignatius Sancho or Ottobah Cugoano, perplexed at discovering such cryptically encoded bias at the heart of 'civilised' minds, gradually challenge and expose these symbolic vindications of ethnic discrimination.[83] Moreover, by the 18th century, the code of the spotted has been transformed into a legal code of segregation whose irrationality needs to be validated on a regular basis. Such a justification offers the code of the spotted, which is shaped into a powerful rhetorical weapon against alien intrusion during the Renaissance.

For readers in the 21st century, having become outsiders to the code of the spotted with the passage of time, it seems indispensable to spell out its 'logic' to arrive at an understanding of the ways in which it has served to perpetuate colour prejudice. What may turn the following analysis into a rather disturbing piece of reading is the fact that in order to understand such discourse one cannot avoid establishing a certain closeness with such language at times. As Charles D. Martin appositely remarks in his excellent study on the public display of Africans in text and image, researchers inevitably also become exhibitors of the rhetoric they intend to expose (2002:2). I fully sympathise with Martin when he declares that he cannot "exonerate [him]self completely" from somehow exploiting the discourse he investigates for his own ends (2002:1-2). This predicament, however, should not act as a deterrent against seeking a closer understanding of how the symbolism of the spotted is constructed.

The following section will explore one by one how the symbols of the leopard, the leper and the lecher serve as placeholders for hybridity in Renaissance discourse in general, and in the English

[83] Notice that a comprehensive history of these early African criticisms of Western colour prejudice has not yet been written. The following sections will briefly touch on some of the responses by late 18th century African authors, yet without going into any depth.

tradition in particular. Based on these findings, the study proceeds to consider through what kind of communicative channels such symbolism is disseminated, and to what degree it would have been critically received or opposed at the time. In the final section, the study close-reads instances in which this symbolism appears in three Shakespearean plays concerned with interethnic unions, i.e. *Titus Andronicus*, *Othello* and *The Tempest*. This section pursues the double aim of both enhancing a critical understanding of these texts, and of establishing to what extent these plays may be regarded as expressing a critical attitude towards such symbolism and towards the bias such symbolism propels. As the concluding chapters hope to show, images of the non-European as the spotted loom large in Renaissance thought, while at the same time these stereotypes are by no means immune to the subtle challenges some contemporary voices express.

Figure 8. Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens.
The Garden of Eden with the Fall of Man (c1617). Den Haag, Mauritshuis.

2. Symbols of the Spotted

The Leopard

Africa is always producing some novelty (Pliny. *Natural History*)
(Page 1956-63:8.17.42)

In Peter Paul Rubens' and Jan Brueghel the Elder's brilliant collaborative work *The Garden of Eden with the Fall of Man* (c1617), there are two main illuminated scenes simultanously attracting the viewer's eye: Eve's calm, graceful plucking of the fruit on the left, and the rough brawl between a leopard and a tiger on the right. The leopard's raised paw, uncannily mimicking Eve's elegant pose, harks back to a theme frequently recurring in Renaissance art: the idea of the Fall unleashing a series of unnatural events disrupting prelapsarian harmony. What Milton in *Paradise Lost* styles: "Earth felt the wound, and Nature […] / Sigh[ed] through all her Works" (Ricks 1989:9.782-83), artists such as Jost Amman (c1539-91) depict as a virtual storm uprooting the animal kingdom, sowing strife between bull and lion, or between leopard and bear (Schmidt 1962: Fig.188). Though somewhat more contained than Amman's vibrant etching (1583, 1589), Rubens' and Brueghel's Fall constructs a similar suspense between the serene, composed Adam and Eve, and the assembly of highly disturbed animals surrounding them, whose anxiety belies the self-possessed air of the Edenic couple about to commit their fatal transgression. Crucially, Ruben's collected human figures are not contrasted with any randomly chosen creatures, but with a pair of felines dyed in the notorious patterns of the spotted and the striped, two patterns whose allegorical meaning closely ties in with the notion of gendering 'unnatural' hybrids.

Although the iconographic roots of the large cats in the Brueghel/Rubens Fall have been thoroughly established, their foregrounding has traditionally been shrugged off as insignificant: they are commonly regarded as 'distracting' from the biblical theme they 'embellish'. Klaus Ertz, the foremost authority on Brueghel, repeatedly frowns on the 'artificial pose' adopted by these feline "actors" (1979:240), which are present in all except one of Jan Brueghel the Elder's celebrated Edenic landscapes (1613 to 1618).[1] Commenting on the earliest of these works, *The Entry of the Animals into Noah's Ark* (1613), Ertz finds the leopard and tiger 'usurping' the place of more traditional species typical of this genre.[2] However, in his rash dismissal of the feline "actors" (1979:240), Ertz fails to recognise the true significance of the evidence he himself furnishes on the origin of the motif. The belligerent leopard is in fact not only Brueghel's, who is known to have been responsible for the

[1] See Ertz 1979:Figs. 307, 308, 311, 311a, 314, 315, 316, one of which (Fig.316) is thought to be an imitation by Jan Brueghel the Younger (Ertz 1979:245).

[2] "Die Tiere rechts vom Baum haben keinen direkten Bezug zum biblischen Geschehen, sie stehen einfach nur da. Ihre Haltung ist gekünstelt und nicht aus dem Bildzusammenhang verstehbar, besonders bei den Löwen, den Leoparden oder dem Pferd, die ‚wörtlich' von andern Malern übernommen wurden. [...]. Mit dem Verschwinden [anderer Tiermotive] und dem Ersetzen durch die ‚Hofschauspieler' Löwenpaar, Lerma-Pferd, balgende Leoparden, die deutlich zum Betrachter gewandt posieren, geht ein Stück Selbstverständlichkeit verloren" (Ertz and Nitze-Ertz 1997:168).

landscape and the animals. Rather, the spotted feline is also intimately related to Rubens' work, since it is based on a similar cat which appears in a replicate of a lost Rubens, C.N. Varin's *Leopards, Satyrs and Nymphs* (c. 1611) (Ertz 1979: Fig.313). This source also provides a plausible motive as to why the leopard in the Mauritshuis should imitate Eve's gesture. In the lost Rubens, the leopard mimics the plucking of a bunch of grapes by a Satyr, i.e. a semi-human, semi-bestial hybrid. There is a strong suggestion, therefore, that the leopard must be somehow linked to the idea of an unnatural, monstrous union, a theme this chapter will further develop and explore.

Employing the leopard as a symbol for unnatural hybridity is of course neither typically Rubens nor Flemish, but based on a medieval iconography which traditionally associates multicoloured felines with the Fall. Medieval manuscript illustrations and frontispieces in 15th century French Bibles often place a leopard at Eve's feet (Jeffrey 1992: "leopard"), and this topos is continued in versions of the Fall by Albrecht Dürer (c. 1504), by Joannes Saenredan (1597) and other contemporaries (Frye 1978a: Figs.164,207). In Hieronymus Bosch's mystifying *Garden of Delights* (c. 1500) (Fig. 9), too, the Archangel Gabriel interrupts his exhortations to Adam and Eve in order to eye the speckled cat strutting up and down in front of the forbidden tree. The cat's role as an ill-omened

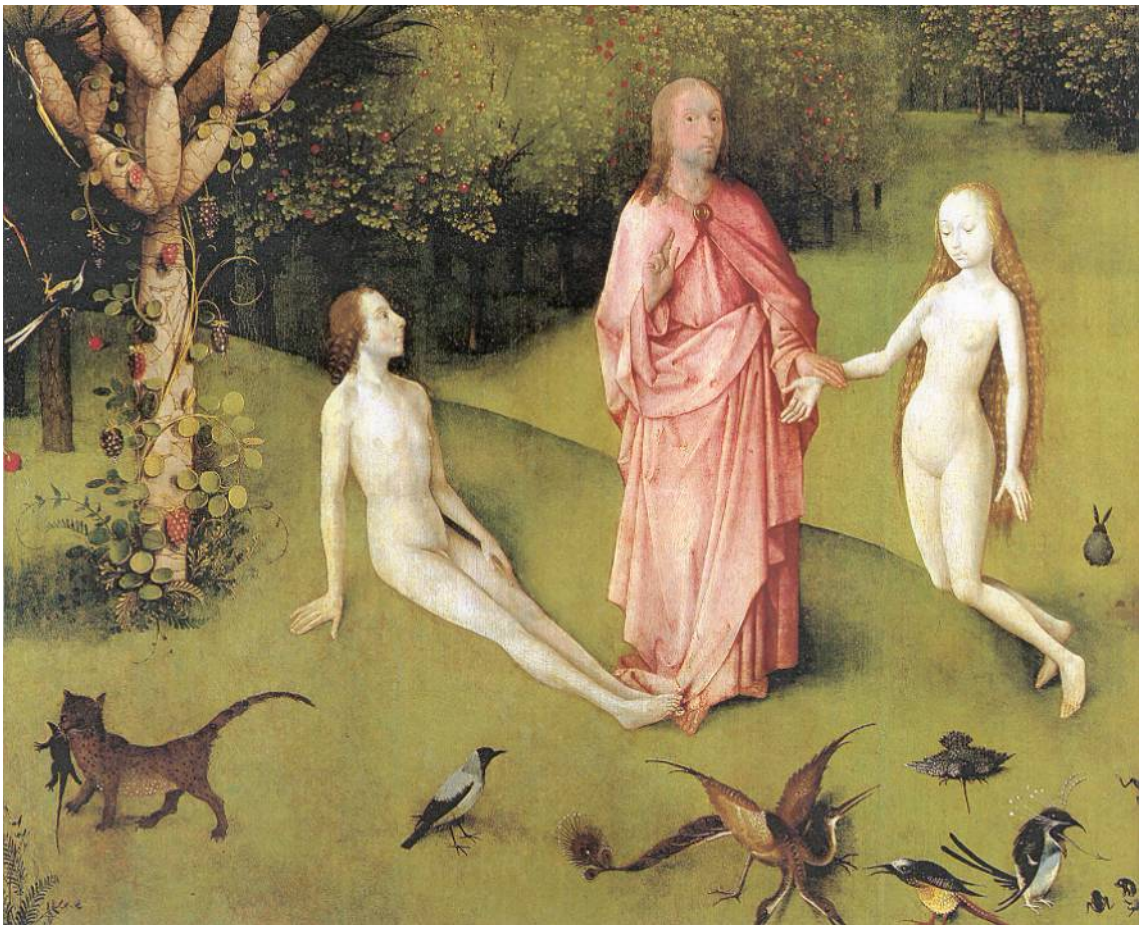

Figure 9. From Hieronymus Bosch's *Garden of Delights* (c1500).
(Belting 2002:72)

harbinger of the imminent Fall is further accentuated by the presence of other unwholesome creatures tinted in dark colours. Magpies, spotted fowls and black moles all foreshadow the ultimate cause of the human Fall, that is magpie-like greed and unbridled desire, and its corollary, the staining of prelapsarian perfection. What Bosch's *Garden of Delights* explicitly foregrounds is only tentatively suggested in other versions of the Fall. In the Dresden Fall by Cornelis Cornelisz (1562-1638), the infamous cat surreptitiously recoils from Eve's sight, taking cover in the shade of a tree (Ehrenstein 1923:Fig.125). And in an anonymous work by the Regensburg School, the feline tempter has been reduced to a mere ephemeral shadow furtively stealing through the dark (Kirchner 1903:Fig.76).

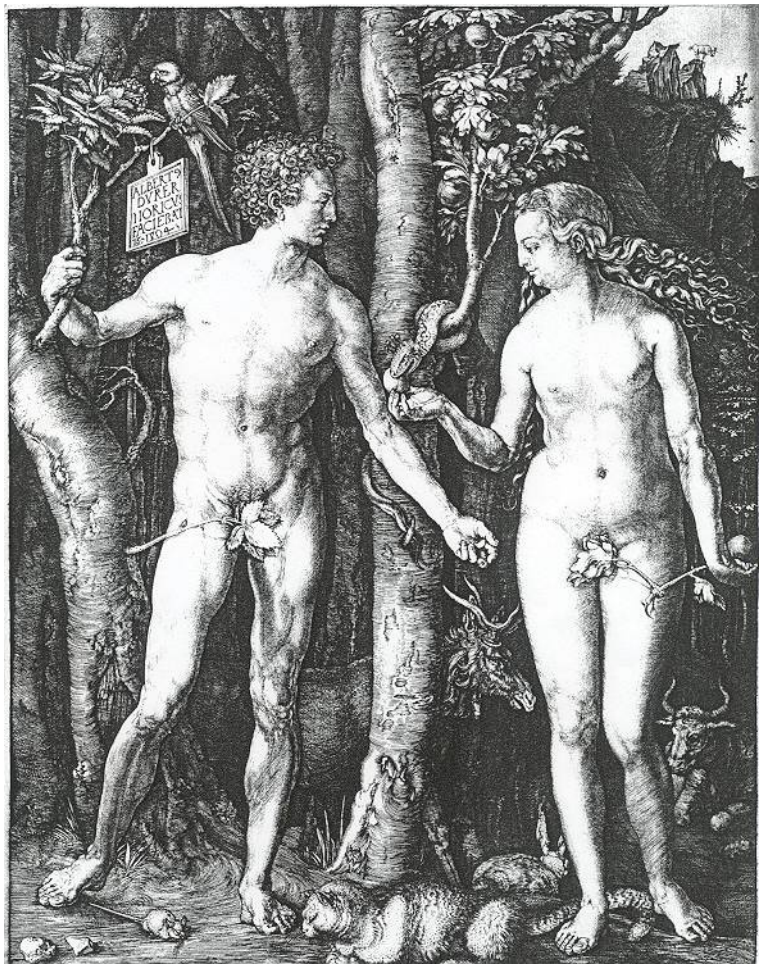

Figure 10. Albrecht Dürer. *The Fall* of the Rosenwald Collection (National Gallery, Washington) (Frye 1978a:Fig. 164)

These striped and spotted felines appear all the more significant if read in relation to the serpent, which remains conspicuously absent in the versions of the Fall by Bosch, by Cornelisz, and by the Regensburg School. Where it does appear, as in the Brueghel/Rubens collaboration reproduced here, it is often outshone by a larger, a more prominently positioned or a more brightly illuminated cat. The serpent's displacement by the feline is further underscored by the cat's tail, which is usually either

placed between Eve's legs or shown pointing towards her body.[3] The frequent visual parallels between the leopard's twisted tail, the serpent's coils and Eve's locks, as in the Fall by Dürer reprinted above, not only build on the traditional reading of the Fall as female transgression, an interpretation mainly shaped by Augustinian doctrine,[4] but, just as importantly, on the portrayal of original sin as resulting from the plotting of a hybrid, 'humanised' snake endowed with the power of speech, whose very act of transgressing the boundary separating beasts from humans becomes its most powerful weapon in duping Eve.[5] In Western iconography, this dual identity is customarily expressed by representing the snake as a semi-anthropomorphic creature possessing a human face, with female features and a hairstyle resembling Eve's, or, as Thomas Browne in his discussion of the topos notes, "with a Virgin[']s head" (Robbins 1981:5.4.375).[6] Likewise, in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, the allegorical figure of Error is imagined as an "ugly monster plaine, / Halfe like a serpent […] / but th'other halfe did womans shape retaine" (Abrams 1993: 1.1.14.123-125). In works in which the serpent is displaced by a multicoloured cat, this notion of temptation breeding hybridity is by no means abandoned, but merely transferred onto an animal whose coat is also viewed as indicative of an unnatural, corrupted origin.

As a substitute for the 'feminised' snake, then, the leopard first and foremost embodies the staining of Eve's body and mind. In the Brueghel/Rubens Fall, the analogy between the beast and Eve is powerfully driven home by the leopard's unusually bright belly, which – by outshining Eve's complexion – foreshadows the staining of humanity's primordial womb. Rubens' main iconographic reference to the staining and stained Eve in the Mauritshuis Fall may be seen in his mesmerising *Head of the Medusa* (1618), a gruesome depiction of Medusa's lopped-off head, whose glassy eyes unbelievably stare at the serpentine hair and at the worms creeping out of her bowels (Fig. 11). As the classical counterpart to the feminised serpent and snake-like Eve of Genesis, this serpentine Medusa

[3] An early example of this topos occurs in the so-called *Bernwardstür* (c. 1100) of the cathedral of Hildesheim, where a winged cat places her thick tail, resembling the branches of the tree, between Eve's ankles (reprinted in Phillips 1987:66).

[4] By far the most detailed analysis of Augustine's reading of Genesis is provided by Neil Forsyth (1987:419-40), who perceives Augustine's condemnation of Eve not so much as a deliberately mysogynist design but as an attempt to eliminate the concept of Manichaean cosmic evil by re-locating it in God's creation. A concise summary of Augustine's teaching on scholastic readings of Genesis is offered by Alcuin Blamires (1997:113-119), who also positions the Church Father's reading of Eve in medieval mysogynistic discourse at large (1992:77-82). See also John Phillips' *Eve: The History of an Idea* (1987), which speculates on a common philological root of 'Eve' and 'snake' (1987:49), and refers to apocryphal and oriental legends describing Eve as being made out of Adam's former snake-like tail, or of the serpent's former feet (1987:50-51).

[5] As Milton emphasises, Eve is utterly amazed at hearing the "Language of Man pronounc't / By Tongue of Brute" in *Paradise Lost* (9.553-54).

[6] See the late 13th c. manuscript illumination in MS 11639 at the British Library (Frye 1978:Fig.161), the *Psalter of Louis IX and Blanche of Castile* (early 13th c.) (Ehrenstein 1923:Fig.52), Masolino da Panicale's *Original Sin* (1424) in Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence (Lorenzi 1997:75, also Frye 1978:Fig.185), Jacopo della Quercia's *Temptation* at the main portal of San Petronio, Bologna (1425-38) (Phillips 1987:73), an illustration to the *Grimani Breviary* (c1500) (Frye 1978:Fig.162), the woodcut illustration to Jodocus Badius Ascensius' *Ship of [Female] Fools*, Paris 1500 (Hartl 2001:1.30), an illustration to the Heures de Chantilly by the Limbourg brothers (early 15th c.) (Ehrenstein 1923:Fig.73), the *Fall* in Hieronymus Bosch's left-hand panel of his triptych *The Hay-wagon* at the Prado, Madrid (Phillips 1987:72), Raphael's Falls in the Camera della Segnatura (Frye 1978:Fig.198) and in the Loggia of the Vatican (Ehrenstein 1903:Fig.58), Crostoforo Solario's sculpture of Eve at Milan Cathedral (Frye 1978:Fig.200), Herri met de Bles' *Fall* (early 16th c.) at the Pinacoteca Nazionale di Bologna (Ehrenstein 1923:Fig.102, also Frye 1978:Fig.186), Joannes Saenredan's *Fall* (1597) (Frye 1978:Fig. 207) or Cornelius Cornelisz' *Adam and Eve in Paradise* at the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam (Frye 1978:Fig.167). By the mid-17th century, this topos of a feminised snake, however, wanes and is no longer understood, as Thomas Browne's arguments against this medieval "conceit" indicate (Robbins 1981:5.4.375).

represents the female body metamorphosed into a mere receptacle of the 'snake within'. Just like the Mauritshuis Fall, Ruben's *Head of the Medusa* operates with contrasts of colour and movement. Similarly to the agitated animals in the Brueghel/Rubens collaboration, Medusa's pallid frozen head is also infested with a plethora of violently agitated reptiles, amphibians and insects. And once more, the destructive energy consuming Medusa's body emanates from particoloured animals, from striped adders and spotted salamanders, whose unwholesome colouring symbolises the shattering of female purity, a topos which is not limited to Rubens' work, but resurfaces throughout Renaissance art.

Figure 11. Peter Paul Rubens. *Head of the Medusa* (1618)
(Bodart 1990:Fig.40)

As pointed out in the previous discussion of Michel Pastoureau's (1995) work, Western iconography systematically reads a variegated surface as the attribute of those trespassing social norms and moral conventions. This applies particularly to socially marginalised groups like Muslims or Jews, to biblical characters like Cain or Judas,[7] and to evil spirits, to demons, and to the fallen angel Satan himself. In the *Klosterneuburger Altar* (c. 1181), for instance, Christ the 'new Adam' rescues the 'old' Adam from the clutches of semi-humanoid and semi-bestial Satan whose body is marked with dark, highly prominent spots (Schmitt 1937:165). The Klosterneuburger Altar and many other contemporary works obviously understand spotted and striped patterns as an abstraction for physical hybridity in a wider sense. In Western depictions of Satan and demons, it is often a monstrous combination of humanoid and bestial body parts which is regarded as tempting and frightening.[8] Analogous to the

[7] See Abel slain by a spotted Cain in an English Psalter (c. 1270-80) (Mellinkoff 1993:3.13), and the betrayal of Jesus by a spotted Judas in the French *Speculum humanae salvationis* (late 14th c.) (Mellinkoff 1993:3.29).
[8] See for example the spotted, horned, semi-humanoid demons in the *Manuscript from Silos* (c. 1109) (Mellinkoff 1993: Fig. 2.1), the spotted devils in Christ's temptation in the Winchester Psalter (c. 1150) (Link 1997:Fig.50), the multicoloured, satyr-like Satan in the Psalter of Amesbury Abbey, England (c. 1250-55) (Mellinkoff 1993: Fig. 4.13), the spotted Lucifer in the stained glass window *Christ and Satan* (c.1225) at the Victoria and Albert Museum London (Frye 1978:Fig.232), or the

tempting of Eve through a humanoid snake, Matthias Grünewald's celebrated *Temptation of St Anthony* (c1512-16) it the Isenheim altarpiece (c. 1512-16) shows a white-haired, bearded St Anthony tortured by a motley crew of gaudily-coloured, hybrid monstrosities collating reptile, amphibian, fish- and birdlike characteristics (Fig. 19).[9] As will be documented further below, this frightening hybridity is also a key association coming to the fore in the context of mingling European and African bodies. Such a link between hybridity and interethnic unions is for example suggested in Pieter Brueghel the Younger's version of *The Temptation of Anthony* (c. 1616), in which the assembly of monstrous females tempting the saint includes not only semi-bestial, semi-anthropomorphic creatures, but also a half-naked female African (Figs. 12).

Figure 12. Excerpt from *The Temptation of Anthony* (c. 1616)
by Pieter Brueghel the Younger (Ertz 2000:E445).

In Pieter Brueghel's version of *The Temptation of Anthony*, the encroachment of a dark, female presence upon the immaculate saint refers to a new kind of hybridity which is continuously problematised in the anglophone tradition. This equation of (interethnic) hybridity with evil on the one

spotted devil in Melchior Müller's *Sterbebild mit Heilstreppe* (1590) at Wettingen monastery, Switzerland (Jetzler 1994:Fig.54).

[9] A similar version of Anthony being tortured by hybrid monsters appears in an engraving by Martin Schongauer (c. 1470) (Frye 1978:Fig.255).

hand replicates conceptualisations of the monstrous as we find them in Herodotus, Pliny or Mandeville, yet it is also linked to Western representations of the figure of Satan as a hybrid creature. From the twelfth century onwards, Satan is overwhelmingly cast as a Satyr, with hooves, a tail, pointed ears, horns and a hairy body (Erich 1931:63-73).[10] This blending of human and bestial elements, which signifies a rejection of uniformity and purity, uncannily resembles the interpretation of Satan's fall in the Early Church. As Luther Link points out in his succinct summary of Neil Forsyth's authoritative study on the *Old Enemy* (1987), the most influential Church authorities and cultural icons from Augustine to John Milton see the cause of the rebel Angels' fall in their pride, their haughtiness and their non-compliance with God's just laws.[11] The Church fathers predating Augustine, however, offer a radically different interpretation, which harks back to a definition of evil as hybridity.

Justin Martyr (c. 100-65), Athenagoras (2nd c.), Clemens of Alexandria (d215), Tertullian (155-220) and others assume that the angels' fall consisted in the seeking of illicit intercourse with female humans, thereby giving birth to evil demons perturbing the world. This long-forgotten interpretation is nothing but a literal reading of Genesis 6, which describes the sinful times pre-dating the flood as a period when "the sonnes of God" took wives among "the daughters of men" (Gen 6:2). This pre-Augustinian reading of the angels' sinning is also supported by the *Book of Enoch* (19:2), which contains a similar episode of male angels engendering evil demons by taking human wives (Forsyth 1987:181). However, following the ban on the *Book of Enoch* at the Council of Chalkedon (401 AD), on account of its supposed affinity to Manichaean thought, this reading of worldly evil as emanating from angelic lust and unnatural hybridity was systematically silenced by an Augustinian doctrine branding such a literal reading as heresy. In the *City of God*, Augustine emphasises that

> certainly I could by no means believe that God's holy angels could at that time have so fallen, nor can I think that it is of them the Apostle Peter [speaks] […]. I think he rather speaks of these [humans] who first apostatized from God, along with their chief the devil, who enviously deceived the first man under the form of a serpent. (Sanford and McAllen Green 1965:15:23)

Augustine's transformation of the "sons of God" into human sinners, becomes unequivocal standard teaching in the medieval Church, and English Renaissance Bible translations, too, speak of unions of "the daughters of the wicked" with the "godly" (rather than with genuinely divine) creatures, thereby obscuring the earliest encoding of evil as hybridity in biblical text.[12]

Interestingly, even though Augustine vehemently rejects the notion that lust can spring from angelic perfection, he does not abandon the concept of sin as a hybrid state. Quite the contrary, Augustine in fact uses the topos of hybrid bodies as a perfect vehicle for attacking Greco-Roman pagan cults. In a lengthy digression in his analysis of Genesis 6 in the *City of God*, he at one point

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[10] For typical examples of a Satyr-like Satan, see Johannes Brantzius' *The Devil and the Invention of Gunpowder* (1604) (Frye 1978:Fig.14) or Rubens' *Michael and the Expulsion of the Rebel Angels* (Frye 1978:Fig.17),

[11] Link (1997:32-35). See Augustine's *City of God* (Sanford and McAllen Green 1965:14.11) and Milton's *Paradise Lost* (Ricks 1989:1.36-44).

[12] The quote is taken from the marginal gloss to the *Bishop's Bible* (1568). A concise summary of the Catholic dismissal of the pre-Augustinian reading of Genesis 6:2 espoused by "Tertullian […] and divers more otherwise good authors" is offered by the Douai Bible (marginal gloss to Genesis 6:4).

interrupts the debate on the origin of evil and starts telling tales of "sylvans and fauns, who […] often ma[k]e wicked assaults upon women, and satisf[y] their lust upon them" (*City of God* 15:23). Augustine's identification of evil with pagan myths foreshadows the later, medieval iconographic convention of representing the figure of Satan with the figure of Satyr. As a slightly bewildered Percy Bysshe Shelley points out in his *Essay on the Devil and Devils* (1819-20),

> [I]t is inexplicable why men assigned him [Satan] these addition [horns, hooves, tail, ears] as circumstances of terror and deformity. The Sylvans and Fauns, with their leader the great Pan, were most poetical personages, and were connected […] with all that could enliven and delight. (1965:103)

To Shelley, the motives for the early medieval refashioning of Satan as a classical Satyr, Sylvan or Faun were far from obvious. Most historians, however, have quite convincingly explained this blending of stereotypes as an attempt by the Church to eradicate the last remnants of heathen faith by identifying non-Christian deities with the ungodly and evil (Link 1997:54-55).

Furthermore, this radical reinterpretation of pagan statues also testifies to the onset of a problematising of hybrid states which is arguably more prominent in the Judeo-Christian tradition than in classical pagan thought. As Mary Douglas convincingly argues in her classic study on *Purity and Danger* (1966), Judeo-Christian thought primarily constructs the binary distinction between purity and impurity on the dichotomy of wholeness or uniformity, and on the absence of such homogeneity: "To be holy is to be whole, to be one; holiness is unity, integrity, perfection of the individual and of the kind" (1966:54). Douglas sees the equation of 'holiness' with 'wholeness', its etymological cognate in Germanic languages,[13] as an intercultural phenomenon which is also borne out in the dietary rules of Leviticus. Levitical law prohibits the touching of certain animal species on the basis of their alleged hybrid status. Interestingly, though, the species declared impure are not classified as such on considerations of hygiene, as is popularly believed, but because they do not fit squarely with a literal reading of the creation as described in Genesis. Starting from the assumption that sky, water and earth must represent the sole natural habitat for winged fowls, fish with fins and four-legged animals, respectively, "[a]ny class of creatures which is not equipped for the right kind of locomotion in its element" (1966:55) is considered an aberration. Therefore, fish lacking fins, birds unable to fly, two-legged animals using their front 'hands' as feet (such as weasels), or terrestrial creatures moving in a 'fish-like manner' (like worms or snakes), not to mention amphibians or chameleons, are like all "[h]ybrids and other confusions […] abominated" (1966:53). This principle is expanded to encompass all aspects of life, be it tending animals and crops, or dressing appropriately, as Leviticus 19:19 states: "Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind: thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed: neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woollen come upon thee" (Douglas 1966:53).

[13] The etymological ties linking *holy* and *whole*, both derivatives of Old English *hal-* and Proto-Germanic **hailo-*, are still visible in the close affinities in High German between *heilig* ('sacred'), *heil* ('complete') and *heilen* ('to heal') (*OED* "holy", "whole").

This problematising of hybridity also forms the backbone of Greek and Roman natural history. Pliny's authoritative *Natural History*, which proved vital for the development of medieval allegory, speaks of various real and imaginary hybrids or *monstrosities*, i.e. beings whose heterogeneous bodies demonstrate a deeper meaning.[14] Archetypal monstrosities such as the sphinx, the centaur, or Pegasus all unite opposites within one body, which is seen as highly problematical in the sense that it deprives them of a proper identity of their own. With Pliny, hybrids do not possess their own characteristic voice, but instead adapt or mimic alien voices, as e.g. the semi-anthropomorphic sphinx which sounds "like a ma[n] but not articulate" (Topsell 1607:17), or the fabulous manticora, a humanoid scorpion-lion, whose voice resembles a blend of trumpet and pan-pipe (Page 1956-63:8.30.75). Several monstrosities are said to mimic the human voice, such as the fanciful leucrocota (Page 1956-63:8.30.73), or the hyena, which not only looks "like a cross between a dog and a wolf" (Page 1956-63:8.30.72), but which is also believed to alternate its gender every year (Page 1956-63:8.44.105). This hybrid status is sometimes also reflected in names, as with the *camelopardus* (literally 'camel-leopard'),[15] a compound which unmistakeably reveals how new and unfamiliar sights are conveniently refashioned into monstrous blends of familiar entities.

In medieval and Renaissance iconography, hybrid creatures are often depicted in combination with particoloured patterns, which are nothing but abstract representations of such hybridity. Lilian M. Randall's rich collection of medieval marginal illustrations features a whole catalogue of bird-sheep, goat-birds, flamingo-necked sheep and other prodigies illuminated in striped or spotted patterns,[16] ranging from mermaids or actors wearing animal masks to animals adopting a human-like pose.[17] For medieval culture, as for Greek thought, the number of ways in which hybridity may be constructed seems virtually infinite. As Mary Douglas astutely remarks, "[o]rder implies restriction; from all possible materials, […] a limited set has been used. So disorder by implication is unlimited" (1966:94). Given that the symbolic function of hybridity is often identical in terms of providing the much-needed foil against which order and purity are defined, there seems no reason why some forms of hybridity ought to be considered more significant than others. For the stereotyping of the non-European body as a hybrid, though, there are three allegorical beasts, that is, the wild boar, the mule and the ape, which are of particular interest because they embody characteristics which Renaissance

[14] The sense of the monstrous as de-monstrating something is reflected in the usages of *monster* as a verb, in the sense of "to transform something into a monstrous version of itself" and "to exhibit as a monster" (*OED* "monster" 1, 2). Notice also that the verb *to demonstrate* was until the late 19th century mostly pronounced with a stress on the second syllable (de'monstrate), as many verbs ending in *–ate* (*OED* "contemplate").

[15] *Camelopardus* is from around 1600 onwards paralleled by the Arabic term *giraffe* (*OED* "Giraffe"). Strangely, though, the concept of hybridity is transformed into the new name. Richard Knolles in his *History of the Turks* (1621) speaks of "[a] live Giraffe (which is a beast like a Cammell and Panther)" (*OED* "Giraffe" 1b).

[16] See the medieval manuscript illustrations compiled by Randall (1966: Figs. 247-48, 369-72, 527), and the particoloured monsters in Pastoureau (1995:8, 13).

[17] See Randall (1966) for medieval manuscript illustrations of humanised hares (Figs. 356, 514), humans with demon heads (Fig. 367), multicoloured mermaids and striped sirens (Figs. 498-501), semi-bestial musicians (Fig. 512), a funeral procession of humanised animals carrying a multicoloured coffin (Fig. 569), or striped satyrs (Randall 1966: Fig. 726). Perhaps the most telling example is provided by Ruth Mellinkoff (1993:Fig. 1.25) in her reprint of an illustration from the *Romance of Alexander* (Flanders, c1344), which shows a group of particoloured actors wearing the masks of an ass, an ape, a goat, a bull and an eagle.

culture also perceives in the leopard, the classic attribute of the African in early modern colonial discourse.

In antiquity, the term *hybrid*, which is originally used for mixed offspring between a tame sow and a wild boar, is related to Greek *hybris*, signifying a 'wanton violence and insolence' (Klein 1966:753). The expression very much reflects the belief that the mixing of opposites or of different kinds represents an illicit violation of natural order which must result in unnatural offspring. Crucially, Pliny and others do not restrict *hybridia* to the animal kingdom, but metaphorically apply it to human beings, as for instance to children born of a Roman father and a non-Roman mother, or to children of a freeman and a slave (Page 1956-63:8.79.213). The term enters the English tongue through translations of classical sources, such as Holland's (1601) rendering of Pliny's *Natural History*, which states that "[t]here is no creature [which] ingenders so soon with wild of the kind, as doth swine: and verily such hogs in old time[s] they called Hybrides, as a man would say, halfe wild" (2.231). Just like authors in antiquity, Renaissance writers also exploit *hybrid* as a figure of speech for children of ethnically 'mixed' unions, who are routinely vilified as bestial. Henry Cockeram's *English Dictionarie* (1623), too, defines *hybrid* as a child "whose parents are of divers and sundry Nations" ("Hybridian"), and in one of Ben Jonson's lesser-known late comedies, *The New Inn* (first enacted in 1629, and printed in 1631), a Welsh widow is mocked with: "She's a wild-Irish born! Sir, and a Hybride" (Herringman 1692: 2.6.730).

Etymologically related to the term *hybrid* is the *hinny* (Klein 1966:753), the crossbreed between a male horse and a female donkey.[18] Representing one of the few genuine crossbreeds among a large number of purely imaginary bestial hybrids, mule and hinny embody the concept of a defective creature in a double sense. First, their proverbial stubbornness,[19] which places them far below mare or stallion, is seen to predestine them for hard, physical labour. Second, their failure to reproduce, which already Pliny notes (Page 1956-63:8.69) marks them as a prototypical hybrids or 'monsters', as the Scottish poet Alexander Hume (c1560-1609) points out, when speaking of creatures which are "monstrous lik[e] the mule" ("Flyting with Montgomerie" 162, *OED* "mule" 2). Indeed, mixed breeds like the mule are often seen as being situated outside God's creation. Walter Ralegh, for instance, claims in his *History of the World* (1614) that Noah could not have had any incentive to save such monstrous creatures in his ark, knowing that they would be recreated again as a result of illicit crossbreeding:

> For those beasts which are of mixt natures, either they were not in that [prediluvian] age, or else *it was not needfull to præserve them: seeing they might bee generated againe by others*, as the Mules, the Hyæna's and the like: the one begotten by Asses and Mares, the other by Foxes and Wolves. (1614:1.7.9.111, emphasis added)

[18] Notice that in classical sources the terms *ginnus* ('hinny') and *mulus* ('mule') are often used interchangeably, as for example with Pliny in his *Natural History* (8.69.172, 174).
[19] "*[A]s stubborn as a mule*, in French *opiniastre comme vne mule* (Cotgrave 1611:"mule").

Furthermore, as the unnatural fruit between mares and asses, the mule often serves as a symbol of sexual perversion. The Scottish poet Alexander Scott, for instance, speaks in "Ye blindit lovers, look" (pre-1568) of "the mule [which] frequents the anis and [thereby] her owin kind abuses" (Williams 1994:921). Scott's term *anis*, a curious blend between *asinus* ('donkey') and *anus*, harks back to the common equation of lustful – since not pregnancy-related – sexual acts with bestiality. As a barren creature, the mule's or hinny's organ becomes the symbol of fruitless, devilish lust (Williams 1994:921), and, in consequence, it also allegorises infertile or promiscuous women relishing such 'unnatural' acts (*OED* "mule" 2b).

Beyond those strictly sexual connotations, the mule also becomes a powerful symbol of human 'hybrids'. In Ben Jonson's *Stape of Newes* (1631), a character is reproached for his ill-defined spiritual belief as "[a] kinde of mule! That's halfe an Ethnicke, halfe a Christian!" (*OED* "mule" II.4.a), and the mule also figures as a symbol for interethnic offspring. In an English translation of Mateo Alemán's picaresque *The rogue: or, the life of Guzman de Alfarache* (1623), the translator James Mabb explains the term *Mulatta* in a marginal gloss as follows: "Mulata, is a maid-child, that is borne of a Negra, and a fayre man; and so on the contrary. And because it is an extraordinary mixture, they compare such a one to a Mule" (Mabb 1623:2.328). Unlike the many folk etymologies cherised in the age, James Mabb's marginal gloss is truly based on actual fact, for the Portuguese and Spanish expression *mulatto* / *mulatta*, first recorded in English texts in 1595, is indeed nothing but the diminutive form for the *mula*, or the mule (Barber 2000:281).

While the hybrid swine and the mule primarily thus stand for postlapsarian, bestial lust, and for deformity resulting from allegedly 'unnatural' unions, the monkey or ape stands for other, equally perilous, qualities of hybridity, namely for deception and confusion. In the Middle Ages, the Latin name of the monkey (*simia*) was believed to derive from its similitude (*similitudinis*) to the human species, an idea recorded in Isidore's *Etymologies* (André 1986:12.2.30-31) and in medieval bestiaries.[20] In the Renaissance, the discovery of humanoid apes, which had previously remained unknown to the West and the Mediterranean (Janson 1952:327-35), is greeted with dismay and horror, growing out of an uncertainty regarding the status of these "men of the woods" or "hairy men", as they were subsequently labelled.[21]

Conrad Gesner considers the monkey a "subtill [i.e. 'cunning'], ironical, ridiculous and unprofitable Beast […] much given to imitation and derision", and to "wicked crafts, deceipts,

[20] See the early 13th century Latin bestiary MS Bodley 764 translated by Richard Barber: "Apes are so called because they ape the behaviour of rational human beings" (1993:48).

[21] *Orang-outan*, Malay for 'man of the woods', is also received as such in the 17th century ("Ourang Outang, quod hominem silvae significat" (The Dutchman James Bontius 1631, *OED* "Orang-outan"). *Gorilla* is the name the Carthaginian explorer Hanno (5th c. BC) is said to have used for the 'hairy men' he encountered on the West African coast, according to Pliny (*Natural history* 6.200) (Janson 1952:327-30), and was adoped in 1847 by the American missionary T.S. Savage for the anthropoid apes of equatorial Africa which he labelled *troglodytes* (!) *gorilla* (*OED* "gorilla").

impostures and flatteries" (1607:2). Its anthropogenic qualities are vastly exaggerated in wonderful tales of monkeys posing as humans, "go[ing] up and downe the streetes so boldly and civilly as if they were Children, frequenting the Market places without any offence" (1607:3).[22] According to Gesner, monkeys are not only aware of their "indecent likenesse and imitation of man" (1607:4), but also exploit it for sport, and especially for the fulfilment of unnatural sexual pleasure. The myth of Indian natives being raped by 'venerous apes' (Gesner 1607:3) is a topos frequently repeated in travellers' accounts of West Africa, and one which Winthrop Jordan considers as having had a devastating effect on Western attitudes to Africans in general (1968:28-32).[23] The monkey's proverbial lechery ("lecherous as a monkey" *2H4* 3.2.285.1 (Q)) turns the beast into a symbol of insatiable desire, a quality it shares with the Satyr, whom Gesner no longer interprets as the humanoid goat of the Greeks, but as a baboon-like ape (1607:12-15). This equation of satyr and 'ape' (which in the early modern period means 'monkey', not 'humanoid large ape') is also reflected in the variation among English translations of Isaiah 13:21. Whereas the *Authorised Version* translates one passage as "[...] and *satyrs* shall dance there", the Coverdale Bible (1535) opts for " [...] and [...] *apes* shall daunse there" (*OED* "ape", n. 1, emphasis added). This analogy between monkeys and satyrs is also preserved later on in scientfic taxonomies, for example in Linnaeus', which features a mysterious humanoid-apish creature called "Satyrus Tulpii" (1760:76).[24]

Moreover, the monkey also stands for desecrating the liturgy, and for mocking the proper faith. John Wyclif speaks of heretical "ape resouns" against Christ (*OED* "ape", n.7), Thomas More of "apishe iesting against the […] blessed sacrementes" (*OED* "apish", a.2), and John Calvin condemns him who "playeth the Ape, and counterfeteth what God hath ordeined for our saluation" (*OED* ape, n. 2b). Heinrich Bullinger (1504-75), a Swiss reformer, labels Antichrist "the Ape of our Lord Christ" (*OED* "ape", n.3), and Jerome declares: "The divell is Gods ape, and seekes to counterfeit Him almost in euery thing" (*OED* "ape", n.3).[25] As the mocker of spiritual holiness, of social hierarchy and of human dignity, Western iconography often depicts apes as semi-humans, involved in unnatural sexual acts, or wearing spotted or striped striped fur, attributes which clearly underscore the status of the ape as a hybrid. (Fig. 13).[26]

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[22] In true Plinian style, Gesner also recounts an anecdote of Alexander the Great, to whom "so many [monkeys] shewed themselves […] standing upright, that he deemed them at first to be an Army of enemies, and commaunded to ioyne battell with them, untill he was certified by Taxilus a King of the Countrey then in his Campe [that] they were but Apes" (1607:3).

[23] See also Kim F. Hall's (1997) reading of the multiple analogies between apes and Africans as expressed in travel narrative, masque and iconography.

[24] Until the present day, the East Asian Orang-outan bears the name *simia satyrus*.

[25] Compare also the Middle English devotional prose work *Ancrene Riwle* (c1230), which calls the devil the "old ape" (*MED* ape, n.3).

[26] See also the medieval manuscript illuminations in Randall (1966) depicting monkeys dressed in human clothes (Fig. 591), partaking in obscene acts (Figs. 534-35), with striped fur (Figs. 14, 65), or with spot-like, irregular hair (Randall 1966: Figs. 325-26, 541, 635). For the Renaissance, see Topsell's (1607) illustrations of a humanoid ape (9), taken over from Gesner's Latin original (1555), and Janson (1952:355).

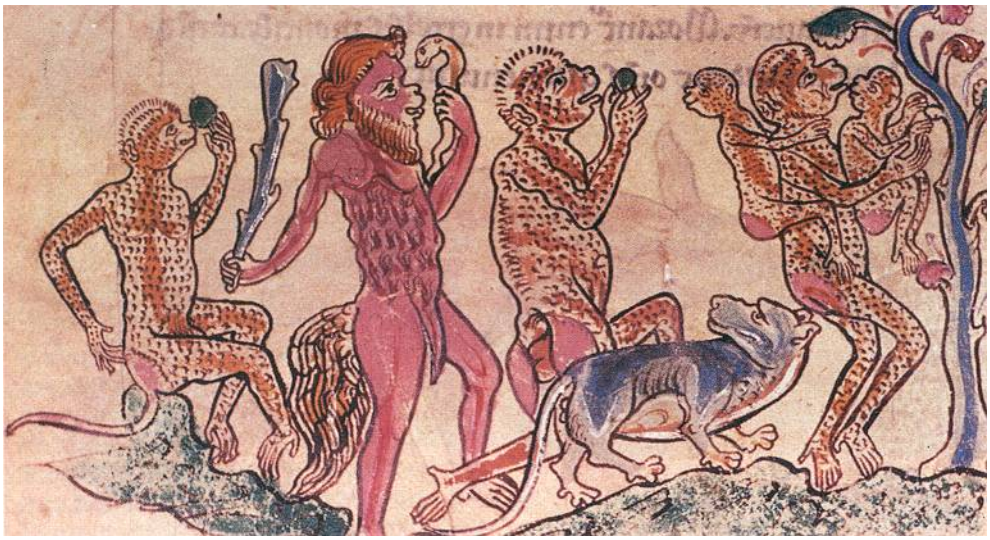

Figure 13. From a 12th-century bestiary at the Bodleinan Library (MS Bodley 602i f.18v)
Spotted monkeys accompanying a simian Satyr (George and Yapp 1991:Fig. V)

In early modern discourse, this portentous symbol of the ape is sometimes also projected onto Africans, though by no means as frequently as in post-Enlightenment anthropology. A female African who was cast in the role of the allegorical Queen of Beauty on the occasion of a tournament held by James IV of Scotland in 1505 was described by the Scottish poet John Dunbar as someone who "mowitt lyk ane aep".[27] A further example may be gleaned from the description of ape-skin-clad Congolese natives in the English translation of Pierre d'Avity's Estates, *Empires and Principallities of the World* (1615:1102), which was most probably inspired by this alleged affinity between apes and Africans. Even though comparisons of Africans with apes seem to appear much less frequently before than after the dissemination of Darwinian evolutionary theories, early modern discourse in many ways paved the way for various constructs of 'simian' Africans in later periods.

The monkey, the mule and the hybrid swine, then, correspond to three symbols of hybridity which also bear a deictic function in interethnic discourse. The beasts often act as symbols for the domestic being corrupted by the savage (as the pig by the boar), for two incompatible species being united in a monstrous hybrid body (as in the mule or the hinny), or for God's image being mocked by mimicry (as in the human by the ape). Clearly, such images lend themselves perfectly to stigmatising the foreigner as a dangerous beast. As has been tentatively suggested in the previous discussion, the monkey, the mule and the hybrid proper are frequently 'rediscovered' in the heretic, the pagan, the 'Turk' (or Muslim), the Jew or in the Irish. In classical and medieval texts, the hybrid is often meant to signpost the cultural and spiritual superiority of Greece, Rome or Christendom. From the mid-16th century onwards, though, the shift of cosmographic and hermeneutic horizons in England leads to a re-

[27] Hunter 1967:188n.31. See Dunbar's poem "Ane Blak Moir", which is reprinted in full in Hall (1995:271). The 17th century "Ape/African Connection" is also discussed in Kim F. Hall's article on "Apes, Africans, and Blackface in *Mr. Moore's Revels* [1636]" (1997).

definition of the self by new concepts of 'Europe', 'Englishness' and 'whiteness'. As a consequence, there are new regions in need of being fenced off by new concepts of hybridity. In Elizabethan England, Africans are clearly among those most vehemently ousted from society, and with the commencement of Jacobean rule the situation does not seem to improve. The preferred vehicle for stigmatising the exotic African body is an exotic beast, the leopard, whose symbolic meaning combines many of the attributes present in the monkey, the mule and the half-tame pig.[28] In order to understand how the leopard attains this status of a hybrid in Western thought, it is worthwhile taking a glance at the making of such myths in natural history from Pliny until the Renaissance, before turning to the symbolic function of the leopard in literature and the visual arts.

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Just like the hyena, the leopard is falsely suspected of being a crossbreed between two proper kinds. The reason for such a misconception lies in its speckled coat, which is erroneously interpreted as evidence of the mingling of two different species. A similar misinterpretation, for example, occurs with the zebra, which in Pierre d'Avity's encyclopedic *Estates, Empires, and Principallities of the World* is likened to a 'fertile mule' on account of its stripes (Grimeston 1615:1099).[29] However, while the zebra enters Western discourse for the first time in the Renaissance period, the leopard is a beast with a long and complex cultural history. The key to understanding the early modern symbol of the leopard is first of all to part with the post-Enlightenment terminology of felines commonly used today. Nowadays, *leopard* and *panther* are the proper terms for the spotted and for the plain dark kind of one and the same species, scientifically called *pantera pardalis*. Etymologically, though, such a separation based on different patterns on the coat does not exist, for classical texts do not display such a semantic distribution. Instead, the two names are nothing but true synonyms stemming from two different languages, i.e. Greek *πάρδαλις* ('pardalis') and Latin *panthera*, and – even more confusingly – they may both stand for either the dark or for the spotted kind (Hünemörder 1999:68). After the Greek term *pardalis* enters Latin as a foreign loan word (*pardus*), the simultaneous presence of both expressions in Latin texts gives rise to the erroneous belief that the two expressions correspond to two different species. Based on this misunderstanding, leopard and panther attain very different meanings in Christian allegory, the panther being revered as a divine beast, whereas the leopard is despised as a monstrous creature.

[28] Sometimes the allegorical leopard overlaps with these three other allegorical beasts, as in Plutarch's essay on "The Cleverness of Animals", according to which "apes are attracted to the panther by their pleasure in its scent" (Cherniss and Helmbold 1957:976D). Mostly, however, the myths attached to these allegorical beasts exist independently alongside each other.

[29] "The same province [of the Congo] breeds another beast called Zebre by the inhabitants, the which is like unto a mule, but it ingenders. […][T]he disposition of the haire is very strange; for from the ridge of the backe to the bellie, there are lines or strikes of three colours, white, blacke, and yellow, and every strike being of the breadth of three fingers. These beasts multiplie greatly, for that they have young every yeare." (1615:1099).

The most influential source determining the development of the leopard myth in the Western tradition occurs in Pliny's *Natural History*, in a passage reporting the rather strange sexual behaviour of the lioness. According to Pliny, the lioness frequently absconds with other beasts of a similar stature, such as the hyena or a spotted cat called the 'pard' (*pardus*), to satisfy her insatiable lust. After mingling with the hyena, the lioness allegedly gives birth to a fabulous monster called the 'corrocotta' (Page 1956-63:8.45.107). When meeting the pard, the lioness is likewise believed to engage in sexual intercourse, which Pliny narrates as follows:

> A lion detects intercourse [of the lioness] with a leopard [*pardus*] in the case of an adulterous mate by scent, and concentrates his entire strength on her chastisement; consequently this guilty stain is washed away in a stream, or else she keeps her distance when accompanying him. (Page 1956-63:8.17.43)

Significantly, this elopement of the lioness is told from the perspective of her male guardian, the lion, who, it seems, is perfectly acquainted with the lioness' unnatural desire. Even though Pliny does not further elaborate on the unhallowed fruit bred between the lioness and the pard, medieval thinkers invent such a monstrous breed, and Isidore Seville also suggests a memorable name for the hybrid offspring: *leopardus*, or literally, 'lion-pard':

> The leopard [leopardus] is gendered through the adultery of the lioness [leaena] with the pard [pardus], and represents a third species. As Pliny says in his *Natural History*, the lion unites with the female pard, or the male pard with the lioness, and the two unions create degenerate bastards, as with the mule or the hinny. (Lindsay 1911:12.2.11, translation mine)

Isidore's coining of the *leopard* is quoted verbatim in many medieval bestiaries and encyclopedias, such as Bartholomew Anglicus' *De rerum naturalibus* (12th c.), which is reprinted until the early 17th century.[30] In most of these medieval adaptations, the lioness's elopement with the pard is elaborated at length in order to flesh out several aspects of the tale. Most important among these is the location of sin in the female body,[31] the lion's ritual chastising of her adultery, her schemes to dodge such punishment, and the lion's anger and sorrow at discovering her carnal knowledge.[32] Interestingly, whereas Isidore allows for the *leopardus* to be procreated either by a female lioness and a male pard or by a male lion and a female pard, later medieval commentators reduce Isidore's balanced narrative to the one version according to which transgression is only committed by the lioness, but not by the lion. Christian allegorists readily embrace the anecdote as a parable mirroring the gender imbalance triggering Eve's fall. Geoffrey Chaucer, for instance, has the notorious Wife of Bath describe herself as someone who is as "stibourn [...] as is a leonesse, / And of my tonge a verray jangleresse ['juggler']" (Benson 1987: 3.637-638).[33] Just as the feline body as such is most frequently associated

[30] See the 12th c. bestiary edited by White (1954:13-14), Bartholomew Anglicus' *De rerum naturalibus* as reprinted in the Frankfurt 1601 edition (18.65), and in the two highly popular translations of Bartholomew by John Trevisa (14th c.) (18.67), and by Stephen Bateman (1582) (18.66), Domenico da Vespolate's *Papias Vocabulista* (1476:178), John Maplet's *A Greene Forest* (1567:92r-93r), George Abbot's *Briefe description of the whole world* (1599:D1r).

[31] The lioness' female character traits are also stressed in Philemon Holland's transliteration of Pliny (1601:8.16.200). Notice that Pliny customarily locates desire in the female, even at the risk of contradicting himself. In the case of the hyena, it is also the male which must prevent the female from indulging in sexual promiscuity (Page 1956-63:8.46.108).

[32] See e.g. Stephen Bateman's repeated emphasis of the lioness being "a right *lecherous* beast, and loveth alwaye the deede of *lecherie*", whose transgression represents a "spouse breaking" (Bateman's translation of *adulterium*) (1582:18.66.371v), or Holland's description of how the lion "with all his might and maine runneth upon her for to chastise and punish her" (8.16.200).

[33] The passage is pointed out in Rowland (1971:48-49).

with the female, so too the leopard tends to symbolise a gender-specific affinity for indulging in sexual pleasure.

In contrast to the monstrous, "unkind pard", as John Trevisa (14th c.) and Stephen Bateman (1582) call it in their transliterations of Bartholomew Anglicus' *De rerum naturalibus*, the panther is described as a modest, pure and unpolluted beast. According to Pliny,

> [p]anthers have small spots like eyes on a light ground. It is said that all four-footed animals are wonderfully attracted by their smell, but frightened by the savage appearance of their head; for which reason they catch them by hiding their head and enticing them to approach by their other attractions. (Page 1956-63:8.23.63)

Mysterious and subtle, the panther's body, unlike the leopard's, does not repulse but attracts. In contrast to Pliny's lioness, whose adulterous mingling with the pard leaves a foul stench on her, the panther issues forth a sweet fragrance. While the pard must conceal its unnatural lust from the lion, the panther hides its natural attribute, i.e. its head and its identity as a predator. Pliny's mysterious panther, which is borrowed from other classical thinkers,[34] is significantly transformed in the *Physiologus* (2nd c. AD), the most influential collection of Christian allegories, and the main source of most medieval bestiaries.[35] The *Physiologus* likens the panther's irresistible fragrance to the universal appeal of the Gospel, and its alleged three-day slumber following every successful hunt to Christ's death and resurrection (Curley 1979:42). The shift from predator to prophet is further consolidated by a folk etymology reading of its name as pan-thera, or 'gatherer of all things', with reference to Greek *pan* ('all') (Curley 1979:43).[36] This interpretation of the panthera as allegorising wholeness and perfection is readily embraced by Isidore (*Etymologies* XII.ii.8) and in medieval bestiaries.[37]

In medieval allegory, then, panthera and leopardus encode opposite values and meanings: the natural vs the monstrous, the kind vs the un-kind, Christ vs Anti-Christ. The last of these distinctions is probably related to the simultaneous presence of two non-Plinian sources, that is, to the seven-headed, leopard-like beast in the apocalypse (Rev 13:2), which is customarily identified as Anti-Christ, and to the obscure Rabbinical tradition which claims that Jesus is the son of a certain soldier

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[34] See e.g. Plutarch (*De sollertia animalium* 976D) or Aelian (*On Animals* 5.40) (Curley 1979: xxxvii). Another classical author to be mentioned is Aristotle, who raises the question: "Why among the animals is not there a single one which smells good apart from the Panther?" (Problems 13, "Of bad smells", quoted in Strubel 1993:1290).

[35] The Physiologus describes natural minerals, plants and especially animals in order to elucidate Christian doctrine, providing a kind of "catechism in a nutshell" (Diekstra 1985:143). The best introduction to the *Physiologus* is offered by Curley (1979:ix-xliii).

[36] "[Panthera means] 'gathering all things', just as our Lord God, as we have said, seeing humankind captured by demons and given over to idols, […] snatched us from the power of the devil and joined us to his goodness" (Curley 1979:43). This etymology is of course fantastical; the term *panther* finds cognates in languages from the far East, such as Sanskrit *pundarika* ('tiger') (André 1986:93 n.123).

[37] The panther-myth is passed on along similar lines as the leo-pardus myth, i.e. through Isidore (12.2.8-9), the *Exeter Book* (Mackie 1934:16.A.12-16), the anonymous 12th c. bestiary edited by T.H. White (1954:14-17), Guillaume Le Clerc's *Bestiary* (c.1200) (Reinsch 1892:2029-2220), the Middle English *Physiologus* (Wirtjes 1991:lines 533-562), Bartholomew Anglicus (1601:18.81), Stephen Bateman's transliteration of Bartholomew Anglicus (18.82), John Maplet (1567:97r-98v), and Philemon Holland's translation of Pliny (8.17.203-04).

named *Pantheras* (i.e. 'the panther').[38] Whatever their ultimate roots, the allegorical figures of the pard and of the panther signify the teaching of the Gospel to those spellbound by its voice and the desecration and contamination of God's creation, respectively.

This divide separating panther and leopard also comes to the fore in illustrations of medieval bestiaries. The pardus of an English 14th century bestiary (Fig. 13) appears as an utterly strange mixture, with the coat of a lion and the claws of a reptile, human facial features, ram-like horns, and a Satyr-like grin, or in short, the embodiment of the monstrous, lecherous hybrid. By way of contrast, a typical illustration of a medieval panther (Fig. 14) shows a 'natural' cat exhaling towards the sky, and a flock of different beasts mimicking its prayer-like pose, while a winged serpent-like dragon is driven away through a hole in the ground, signifying the defeat of evil by the spirit. In text and image, then, panther and leopard stand for those united in spirit as opposed to those united in the flesh, for the whole versus the fragmentary, for the holy versus the monstrous.

Figure 13. Pardus. From an English 14th-century bestiary (Lloyd 1971:11)

Figure 14. Panthera. From the Oxford MS Bodley 602 (Hassig 1995:Fig.167)

As Sigrid and Lothar Dittrich have pointed out in a new reference work on animal symbolism, this medieval dichotomy of the good panther and the evil leopard survives to some extent in Renaissance art, especially in Italian paintings (2004:186-190, 283-86). Predominantly, though, this Manichean dichotomy gradually melts away as the two allegorical beasts are secularised and studied in closer detail by early modern scientists. The actual turning-point in the interpretation of the beasts occurs with Conrad Gesner's *Historia animalium* (1555), translated by Edward Topsell as *The Histories of Foure-Footed Beastes* (1607). Gesner scrutinises classical and medieval sources on

[38] See Origen's *Against Celsum* I.32: "Let us return, however, to the words put into the mouth of the Jew, where *the mother of Jesus* is described as having been *turned out by the carpenter who was betrothed to her, as she had been convicted of adultery and had a child by a certain soldier named Panthera*. Let us consider whether those who fabricated the myth […] were not blind when they concocted all this to get rid of the miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit." The passage is pointed out by Bodendorfer-Langer (1993:1310).

spotted cats with far greater precision than his precedessors, and by meticulous philological research manages to show that the terms *panther* and *pard* (or *libbard*) must refer to the self-same species (1607:575). However, although identifying them as the same species, Gesner believes that panther, pard and leopard constitute three subgroups which differ in size and in degrees of "adulterous generation". While "the greater Panthers [engender] with the lyonesses", the smaller pards, allegedly the fiercest and cruellest of all, are said to mingle with smaller felines (1607:577). Apart from their monstrous birth, panther, pard and leopard are also said to share their sweet smell, which is reinterpreted as a symbol of secular allure and beguiling.[39] Consequently, Gesner sees the species' behaviour as prototypical for female seduction: "Among all beasts the lyon doeth most resemble the male, and the pardall the female" (1607:579). In a memorable passage, Gesner elaborates on the 'feminine' features of the pard, and thereby unwittingly discloses his own fascination with the female flesh:

> It hath a little face, a little mouth, little eies, somewhat white, plaine, and not much hollow, a long forehead, eares rather round then smooth or broad, a necke very longe and slender, the brest not wel set out with ribs, because they are small, the backe long, *the buttocks and thighs very fleshy*, the partes about the small of the belly or loines are more smooth, lesse hollow and bunchy. (Topsell 1607:579, emphasis added).

With Gesner, then, Christ-like pan-thera (or 'saviour to all') has been superseded by an unnatural Pan-thera (or a Pan-like hybrid), which is feminised and shaped into a cunning, enchanting temptress.[40]

The Gesnerian reading of the leopard or panther as a corrupted and corrupting beast remains the most authoritative reading of the animal until the Restoration period,[41] and also reverberates throughout several passages in Shakespearean drama. In *King John*, Philip the bastard taunts the Duke of Austria with the words: "Sirrah, were I at home, / At your den, sirrah, with your lioness, / I would set an ox-head to your lion's hide / And make a monster of you" (2.1.290-92). And in *1Henry 6*, Talbot, realising that his English countrymen flee 'like crying whelps' from the French, shouts at his forces:

> Sheep run not half so treacherous from the wolf,
> Or horse or oxen from the leopard,
> As you fly from your oft-subdued slaves. (I.vii.30-32)

The highly unusual stress pattern in the word *leopard* (lé-o-párd)[42] clearly indicates that the leopard is here still understood in its etymological sense, i.e. as a bastard offspring gendered by *leo* and *pard*.

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[39] In order to substantiate the extension of the panther's sweet smell to the (leo)pard, Gesner supplies his own (folk) etymological reading of the name *pardalis*, allegedly "derived from the Hebrew world Pardes, signifying a Garden, because as colours in a Garden make it spotted and render a fragrant smell" (1607:578).

[40] The association of the panther's seduction and allure already occurs tentatively in French medieval romance (Strubel 1993:passim). A link between the panther and the female is also suggested in some cases where the animal does not stand for Christ, but for the Virgin Mary (Bitterli 1997:74).

[41] See the adaptation of Gesner in John Swan's *Speculum Mundi* (1635:442-43), or in Edward Phillips' *The New World of English Words* (1658), which defines the 'leopard or panther' as a beast "begotten between a Pard and a Lionesse" ("Leopard"). Gesner's ambiguous beast also survives Thomas Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646), the most comprehensive work debunking classical and medieval myth, which mentions neither leopard nor panther. By the late 17th century, though, the fascination with the 'degenerate' spotted cat gradually wears off. When John Dryden's *The Hind and the Panther* (1687) attempts to revive the allegory to vindicate Catholicism ('the Hind') from being defiled by the Anglican Church ('the Panther'), the simile appears too archaic to win popularity with the Restoration public (Duggan 1992).

[42] The extraordinary trisyllabic stress pattern has been noted before (Cairncross 1962:33 n.31).

How this allegorical leopard or panther is instrumentalised in Shakespearean plays dealing with interethnic discourse will be further discussed in the following chapters of this study.

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Having surveyed the making of the allegorical leopard and panther in the Western tradition, how does this tally with Renaissance discourse on Africans and with the Brueghel/Rubens Fall discussed at the outset of this chapter? With respect to the Mauritshuis Fall, I hope to have shown conclusively that spotted and striped felines are by no means "meaningless actors" (1979:240), as Klaus Ertz surmises, but that they constitute part of a continuous topos in the Western tradition, from Pliny to Milton, and from late medieval art to Rubens. As a symbol of unnatural hybridity, particoloured cats are especially prominent in visual and literary versions of the Fall, as e.g. in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, where the spotted leopard at the opening of the *Inferno* (1.31-45) tempts the narrator to stray from the righteous path, casting a long-lasting spell from which the narrator cannot free himself until much later (*Inferno* 16.106-14).[43] Similarly, in *Paradise Lost*, the staining of Adam and Eve's "spotless innocence" (IV.318), resulting from Eve's fatal decision to work unprotected by Adam in a "delicious spot" (9.439), is foreshadowed by the sudden appearance of various fierce creatures, "Bears, Tigers, Ounces, Pards, / Gamboll[ing] before them [Adam and Eve]" (4.344-45). The reference to these multicoloured cats and to the bear, another 'monstrous' beast in Western thought,[44] establishes like the Brueghel/Rubens Fall a contrast between a calm Edenic pair and an agitated animal kingdom, whose anxiety warns of the imminent seizure of the forbidden fruit. Milton in the quote above conveys this sense of anticipation by opting for the preposition *before*, which he uses both as a temporal and as a locative, thus turning the animals' 'gambolling' into a 'dumb show' performed in front of the Edenic pair immediately prior to their own fall.

In the Brueghels/Rubens collaboration, the strife between leopard and tiger, somewhat more belligerent than the playful 'gambling' in Milton's Eden, likewise foreshadows the discord which will separate Adam and Eve and sow enmity among the human race. The reference to Pliny is most clearly invoked by the stern-looking male lion positioned in the background, whose object of dismay is not a

[43] "And behold, near the beginning of the steep, a leopard light-footed and very fleet, covered with a spotted hide! And it did not depart from before my eyes, but did so impede my way that more than once I turned round to go back" (Singleton 1970:1.31-45). The term Dante uses is *lonza*, an expression Florentine writers use for lynx, panther or leopard, and also in the sense of an Isidorean hybrid (Battaglia 1975:"Lonza"; *Enciclopedia Dantesca* 1970-78:"Lonza"; and see Singleton's commentary to *Inferno* 1.32). Dante is believed to have borrowed the symbol of the obstructing leopard from the Salomonic proverb "[t]he slouthfull sayeth: there is a leoparde in ye waye" (Prov. 26:13, *Coverdale Bible* (1535), quoted in *OED* "leopard" 1a). Dante's spotted "lonza" stands for material things and earthly desires, and particularly for luxury, which the *Divine Comedy* generally brands as sinful (Battaglia 1975 "Lonza"), envy (Barbi 1963: 7), fraud (Durling 1996:36, 257-58), or lust (Gmelin 2002: 7).

[44] In the Western tradition, the bear's "venerous and lustfull disposition" is assumed to stem from the "most ardent inflamed desires" of their females, which constantly "doe provoke the males to copulation" and thereby inflame their aggressiveness (Gesner 1607:37). Bears are traditionally thought to give birth to white, shapeless lumps, which the mother subsequently licks into shape (Pliny. *Natural History* 8.54.126), an idea which Conrad Gesner dismisses as a groundless superstition (1607:37).

guilt-ridden lioness, as we find her in other versions of the Fall,[45] but the brawl between two variegated felines, whose bodily patterns encode the loss of pre-lapsarian purity. This suspense preceding the imminent staining of female purity is further emphasised by supplementing yet another allegorical beast dressed in conspicuous spots, namely the peacock.

The peacock gazing on Eve may be most meaningfully read as a reference to a narrative of defilement we find in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Argus, the many-eyed monster, who on Hera's behest has been ordered to guard the heifer Io against Zeus' amorous advances, is killed by Hermes on Zeus' command. Furious at this deliberate murder, Hera decides to pay tribute to Argus by placing his eyes on the tail of her favourite bird, the peacock, thereby immortalising the faithful guardian.[46] Argus the 'star-eyed' custodian is generally depicted as bearing eyes all over his body, both in Greek art as well as in Renaissance painting.[47]. Peacock 'eyes' are also often found on the feathery wings of archangels, who take over the role of Argus in Christian thought.[48] Brueghel's peacock, beset with Argus' eyes, takes over that self-same role of the hapless guardian trying in vain to prevent the defiling of innocent purity. As if its turned head towards Eve were not evidence enough, Brueghel has also slipped in the object of Zeus' desire, Io the cow, at the far right of the painting, where it comes dangerously close to the lifted paw of the leopard, the ravisher of female purity. The idea of parallelling the Biblical Fall with other narratives of decay, such as the 'Plinian fall' and the Fall of Io/Argus, is quite conventional in Western art, and sometimes also prevails in a more abstract sense. In depictions of the expulsion from Paradise, medieval illustrations often show Gabriel handing Adam and Eve striped robes, as e.g. in a miniature of the Bible of Burgos (c1160-80) (Fig. 15), or in a mosaic in the Real Cappella Palatina at Palermo (12th c.) (Ehrenstein 1923:Fig.28). In the Flemish *Medici Tapestries* (c1550) (Fig. 16), the patterned garments have been replaced with ragged leopard skins, testifying once more to the prominence of the beast in Western iconography.

[45] See the guilt-ridden lioness in the fifth part of the Medici Tapestries (Frye 1978a:Fig.152), and the downcast, yet fully alert lioness resting behind Dürer's life-sized Eve at the Gallerie degli Uffizi in Florence (Frye 1978a:Fig.184, Ehrenstein 1923:2.114).

[46] "Yet would not Iuno suffer so hir Heirdmans eyes decay; / But in hir painted Peacocks tayle and feathers did them set, / Where they remayne lyke precious stones and glaring eyes as yet" (Golding 1567:13 [1.721-23]).

[47] See the Greek illustrations of a 'spotted' Argus in Yalouris (1990:Figs. 4, 7, 11, 13) and Pintrucchio's *Hermes and Argus* (1493-95) (Rowland 1999:Fig.9).

[48] For examples of Argus-eyed wings, see Rogier Van der Weyden's *Saint Michael Weighing the Souls* (c.1450) (Néret 2003a:167) and Franscesco Botticini's *Three Archangels with Tobias* (c. 1470) (Néret 2003b:164).

Figure 15. The expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Bbible of Burgos (c1160-80) (Pastoureau 1995:9)

Figure 16. The expulsion of Adam and Eve from the *Medici Tapestries* (c1550) (Frye 1978a:Fig 154)

This identification of the leopard with forbidden or unnatural love is also frequently alluded to in early modern drama. Perhaps the most memorable of such instances occurs in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in which the creatures foreshadowing the amorous spell cast on Titania are spotted snakes and leopards. In their lullaby, Titania's fairies attempt to ward off evil by chanting: "[S]potted snakes with double tongue […] come not near our fairy queen" 2.2.9-13), yet their charms are disturbed by Oberon, who intervenes by dropping the juice of 'freckled' cowslip (2.1.13) on her eyelids. The juice has the power to make her fall in love with the first creature she espies upon awakening, no matter whether it be "ounce, or cat, or bear, / *Pard*, or boar with bristled hair" (2.2.29-30, emphasis mine). As the plot thickens, the magic potion does indeed prove its worth, for Titania falls in love with a human hybrid (the ass-headed Bottom), whose physiognomy perfectly matches the unnatural spell triggered by the freckled plant.

Another important subtext in Shakespearean texts related to the spotted cat is the association with male and female prostitutes. The expression *catamountain*, a synonym for leopard in 16th and 17th century drama, is often used as a euphemism for either *catamites*, i.e. "boys kept for unnatural purposes" (*OED* "catamite"), or for female prostitutes.[49] The spotted feline is, however, not just a symbol of promiscuous bodies, but also of those masterminding promiscuity, that is pimps or procurers of illicit amours. The most prominent chaperone frequently likened to a spotted cat is

[49] The term catamite is a corruption of Ganymede, i.e. the name of Jupiter's cup-bearer (*OED* "catamite"). For usages of *catamountain* with reference to female prostitutes, see Thomas Dekker's *Satiromastix* (1601) 3.186 ("my nimble Cat-a-mountaine") and *Penny-Wise* (1631) E verso ("the poor Cat a mountaines in Turnebull"), Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) (Waith 1963:4.5.72) ("Cat-a-mountaine-vapours"), and James Shirley's *Grateful Servant* (1629) 1.4.p.59 ("springing cat-a-mountains, ladies of blood, whose eyes will make a soldier melt, and he were composed of marble" and *Gentleman of Venice* (1639) 3.4.pp.1530-31 ("[W]hat man of Menaces / Dare look awry upon my Cattamountaine?"). All passages are pointed out by Williams (1994:217-18). I would like to thank Prof. Peter Hughes for drawing my attention to the importance of the *catamite.*

Pandarus from the Troilus and Cressida myth, whose very name – often shortened to *Pander* in the play[50] – is known as a synonym for a "go-between in clandestine amours" (*OED* "pander" 2a).[51] From *Troilus*' Pander, it is only a small step to the early modern concept of the *panther*, both in terms of enunciation and symbolic meaning. The same *double entendre* also occurs in several other Shakespearean plays which either invoke the character of Pandarus 'proper' or refer to a male seducer by the same name.[52] That the topos of the Pandarus/panther is widely disseminated in Renaissance discourse is further illustrated by the fact that the term is modified into an adjective ("O, you panderly rascals!" (*WIV* 4.2.101-02)) and even into a verb ("reason panders will" (*HAM* 3.4.78)).[53] It is not surprising, therefore, that the figure of Pandarus the pimp should also resurface in the historical records of another guild of "traders in the flesh" (*TRO* 31.15), namely of those running a trade in human bodies in a colonial context.

On the coat of arms of the notorious Sir John Hawkins (1532-95), "Queen Elizabeth's Slave Trader" (Kelsey 2003), we find the emblems of three heads of African slaves tied with cords around the necks, together with two rampant lions (Figs. 17-18). While the display of bound Africans is most probably meant as a challenge to the Portuguese, who controlled the slave trade at the time, and whose coats of arms typically showed bound Africans (Hall 1995:19), the element of the lion is related to the English tradition. The lion has served as England's heraldic beast ever since Richard Lionheart (Pastoureau 2001:110-11), and would have certainly been recognised as a national symbol at the time. Hawkins' coat of arms thus carries a political message, a challenge to Portugal's trading rights by England, or to be more precise, by traders clandestinely supported by the English crown.[54]

Furthermore, Hawkins' juxtaposing of the feline with the African may also represent a cryptic encoding of the Plinian fall. Just as Pliny distinguishes between the 'pure' lion and the 'degenerate' leopardus, so too heraldists differentiate between the noble lion, always set in profile, and the evil lion, always facing the viewer. This evil lion used to be called *léopard* among the French, but was re-named *lion pasant guardant* by the English adopting this emblem (Pastoureau 2001:112).[55] What Hawkins' coat of arm does is juxtapose the 'good' lions (set in profile) with 'evil' Africans (facing the viewer). By means of this simple heraldic code, Hawkins iconographically likens England's slave raids to chivalric deeds while marking the victims as a degenerate breed. Interestingly, the same equation of African slaves with evil leopards also occurs in much later visual texts such as Charles Lemonier's

[50] See *TRO* 1.1.91, 95, 99; 1.2.263; 3.2.12, 197; 3.2.188, 190, 31.15-16.
[51] The *OED* illustrates this with *WIV* 5.5.154-56: "Marry sir, we'll bring you to Windsor, to one Master Brooke, that you have cozened for money, to whom you should have been a pander" (*OED* "pander" 2a).
[52] See "Troilus the first employer of panders" (*ADO* 5.2.27), "Thou art the pander to her dishonour" (*CYM* 3.4.29"), "like a base pander" (*H5* 4.5.13 [Q]), "Camillo was his help in this, his pander" (*WT* 2.1.48), "pander and the son and heir of a mongrel bitch" (*LR* 2.2.19).
[53] See also the definition of *to pander* in the *OED*: "[T]o act as a pander to; to minister the gratification of another's lust" or "to subserve or minister to base passions, tendencies or designs" (*OED* pander 1, 2).
[54] Although Hawkins did not directly act on behalf the crown, Queen Elizabeth lent Hawkins her support by supplying him with ships for his slave trading (Kelsey 2003:18).
[55] Pastoureau (2001:112) explains the renaming of the English heraldic beast as a defense against the 14th century ridiculing of the coat of the Plantagenets as featuring a bastard beast.

Allegory of Commerce (1791) (Fig. 19), which shows grief-stricken Africa repulsing her own children while seated on a giant leopard rug.

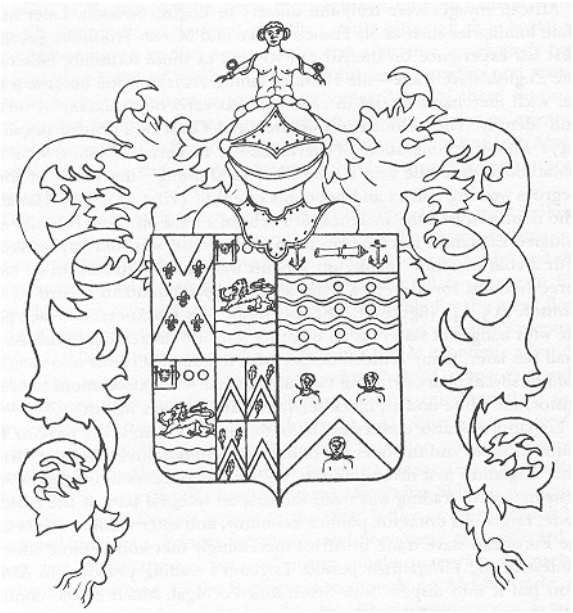

Figure 17. John Hawkins' coat of arms (Hall 1995: 20 Fig. 2)

Figure 18. Robert Boissard's engraved portrait of John Hawkins (1618) with a simplified version of his coat of arms (Kelsey 2003: 305 Fig. 23)

Figure 19. Excerpt from Charles Lemonier's *Allegory of Commerce* (1791) (Bugner 1979:4.1.Fig.35)

Even though this concept of the "slave-pander" is apparently first coined in the Renaissance,[56] we find references to Africans and 'Orientals' as 'human panthers' already in medieval times. As pointed out earlier, the combination of Africans with particoloured felines already constitutes a widespread topos in classical Greek art, and also occasionally in medieval iconography. However, with the notable exception of Michel Pastoureau (1995), scholars seem to have regularly reproduced this pattern without accounting for its significance. In the immensely rich *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, the editors marvel at a 14th century manuscript illustration showing a group of Muslim soldiers riding equine leopards, or at a 13th century mural paiting of an Africanoid giant bearing a winged apocalpytic leopard as his heraldic sign, without offering a cogent explanation.[57] In the same manner, critics have professed great puzzlement at the naked, blue-skinned Africans which ornate the initial of the letter *P* on a series of 12th century French manuscripts of some of St Paul's epistles (Fig. 20).

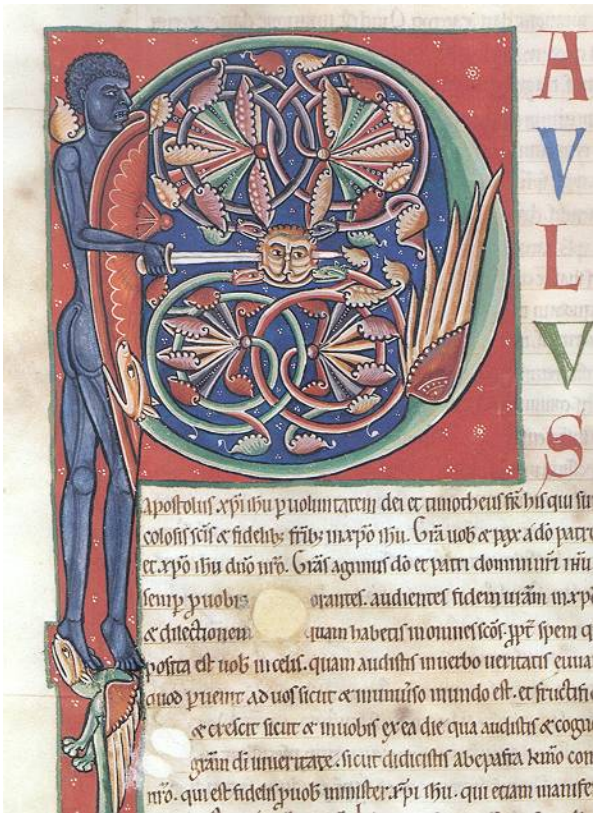

Figure 20. Decorated initial *P* from a 12th-century manuscript of the epistles of St Paul (Bugner 1979:2.1.Figs.18)

[56] See Cyril Tourneur's *Revenger*[']*s Tragœdie* (1607), we find the telling line: "Where's this slave-pander now?" (*OED* "slave" 2.6a).

[57] See the illustration to Marino Sanuto's (1321) account of the encirclement of Lesser Armenia, Egypt and the Christians of Nubia by Muslim Forces (Bugner 1979:2.2.Figs.88-89) and the French 13th c. mural paiting of William and Orange fighting the giant Ysore (Bugner 1979:2.1.Fig.94). A similar illustration occurs also in a 14th c. French apocalypse, where African soldiers are dressed in spotted armour, riding spotted horses with human heads, probably a reference to the winged leopard in Rev 13:2 (Bugner 1979:2.2.Fig.65).

As the editor Ladislav Bugner explains in the accompanying text, the presence of these 'bluemen' is particularly puzzling since the Pauline epistles do not make reference to any Africans whatsoever. Read within the context of the myths surrounding the promiscuous *p*ard, though, the juxtaposition of somatic and physiognomic otherness with the letter *P* appears perfectly meaningful, as does the presence of a feline head pierced by the blueman's sword. A similar source of bewilderment has been the 13th century illustration of *Parzival* reproduced and discussed in the opening to chapter one (Fig. 9). Even though the text of *Parzival* identifies the heraldic animal on Feirefitz' shield as a snake, this illustration opts for an obscure mammal which critics have taken to represent either a fox or a leopard (Schirok 1985:183, Dressler 1970:27). Again, in view of the leopard's semiotic function of replacing the serpent in Western iconography, the medieval illustrator's poetic license seems to make perfect sense.

Bearing in mind the multiple symbolic meanings united in the leopard, there is thus a direct link between the Mauritshuis Fall (discussed at the beginning of this chapter) and colonial discourse, which is further accentuated by the tropical setting which Brueghel's and Rubens' felines evoke. In Greek and medieval thought, monstrous hybrids and semi-anthropomorphic beings are typically projected onto the margins of the known world, be it in the farthest West (Atlantis, the underworld) or in the farthest East (Scythia, Cain's race), in the North (Thule) or in the South (India and Ethiopia) (Campbell 1988, Romm 1992). Such anomalies are often said to spring up spontaneously in these regions, fostered by an 'unnatural' climate. Pliny claims that the ultimate cause of many a monstrous birth is actually Africa's drought, which forces different animals to mingle indiscriminately around the same waterholes, thus providing perfect opportunities for unnatural elopements. "This", Pliny asserts, "is indeed the origin of the common saying of Greece that Africa is always producing some novelty" (Page 1956-63:8.17.42).

Pliny's highly suggestive remark captures not only the deep mistrust against the 'new', which characterises a great deal of Renaissance discourse.[58] Read as metatext, Pliny's dismissal of 'novelties' also unwittingly exposes the central dilemmas hampering Western discourse on exotic 'monsters'. Ironically, in order to reconcile unfamiliar sights with an outdated epistemological framework, Renaissance writers are constantly forced to create novel hybrids in order to render impressions of new worlds 'decodable' via Western epistemes.[59] This problematic drifting apart of the world and the word is further acerbated by the revival of the classics in the Renaissance. Parallel to the discovery of new lands, Pliny is also rediscovered and popularised in at least 46 editions between 1450 and 1550 (Cohen

[58] Needless to say, Pliny's notion of monstrous genderings on African soil are echoed in a large number of works including André Thevet's *New Found Worlde* (1568:5r), George Abbot's *Briefe description of the whole worlde* (1599:Cviii-Di) or Helkiah Crooke's *Microcosmographia* (1631:300) (Burnett 2002.:204 n.9).

[59] An interesting example of how foreign cultures are refashioned into 'hybrid' cultures is found in the *Livre des merveilles* (c.1405), where the worship of Indian Hindu deities is represented as a flawed kind of Christian worship. The example is of particular interest because the *Livre des merveilles* communicates this 'hybrid' status of Indian culture by placing the Indian worshippers on a chequered stone floor (Mitter 1977:4-6, 16).

1980:2). As a result, Pliny's concept of exotic 'novelties' directly feeds into Renaissance thought, being quoted by Rabelais ("Africa always produces new and monstrous things" (Cohen 1980:2)) and adapted by Jean Bodin ("[P]romiscuous coition of men and animals took place, wherefore the regions of Africa produce for us so many monsters" (Jordan 1968:31)).

This notion of exotic climate breeding monsters is also centrally concerned with the anguish of explorers and colonisers for their own health and sanity. Indeed, from the Renaissance to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and beyond, fear of incipient madness and physical illness is uppermost in European minds. Crucially, these contexts of mental and physical illness also represent two key subtexts which the Western tradition attaches to the leopard. With Renaissance naturalists, the leopard allegorises leprosy, syphilis and a range of other diseases associated with tropical climates (see page 97). One further link which resurfaces especially in the visual arts is the association of the leopard with the madness of the Maenads, the female followers of Dionysus, and with Dionysus' drunkenness. As shown below, the Dionysian leopard also sometimes appears in combination with African bodies, which reveals it to be a classical myths regularly adapted and transformed in Renaissance colonial discourse.

In Greek and Roman representations of the Dionysus cult, the spotted pattern of the cat's fur symbolises the spirit of the heightened frenzy in which the Maenads, the female worshippers of Dionysus, attack their enemies and tear asunder huge beasts with their bare hands. The oldest and most detailed account of the Maenads appears in Euripides' *Bacchae* (c405 AD), which tells of the persecution of the Maenads by Pentheus, and of Dionysus' bloody revenge executed by his female followers. In the play, Dionysus, who visits Thebes in human disguise, fills Pentheus with a burning desire to see these Maenads, and convinces him to cross-dress as a female Bacchant in order to spy on them. Having goaded Pentheus near the Maenad's camp, Dionysus transforms the Maenads into a raging horde (< Gk. *mainas*, 'to rave' (Heinze 1999:640)), and makes Pentheus' mother, a Maenad herself, kill her own son. Convinced that she has killed a lion, Agave parades her son's lopped-off head through the streets of Thebes, until Dionysus' spell wears off and she realises the deed she has committed.

Throughout the play, insanity and delusion are expressed through symbols of bestiality. When Pentheus attempts to tie up Dionysus in a corncrib, the god's spell has him rope up a bull instead (Kovacs 2002:[page]71). Also when Pentheus departs for Maenads' camp, he is under the illusion that the Dionysus guiding him is actually a bull, with horns sprouting on his head (Kovacs 2002:[page]101). Likewise, as some of Pentheus' men attack the Maenads in order to capture Agave and bring her back to Thebes, the Maenads retaliate not by killing the fleeing Thebans but their cattle,

"tearing asunder a bellowing fatted calf with their hands" and "t[earing] heifers to pieces" (Kovacs 2002:[page]81).[60]

These uncanny confusions of humans with beasts, and vice versa, coincide with a distinct dress code of the Bacchants. In order to set themselves apart from the non-believers, the Maenads and the worshippers in Thebes carry a 'thyrsus' (i.e. a long staff ornated with ivy) and wear a dappled skin of a fawn (i.e. a young hart) (Fig. 21).[61] This spotted dress bears a special significance, for it is not only worn by the Meanads, but also by Pentheus in his act of crossdressing. In visual sources, the Bacchic wand appears in different variations. While Euripides' text consistently speaks of Maenads dressed in *fawn skin*, Greek vases often simply show the Maenads dressed in spotted cloth, or wearing the skin of another spotted creature: the leopard.[62] Sometimes, this leopard theme is developed even further. On one remarkable Attic kylix by the Brygos Painter (5th c. BC), we see an ecstatic Maenad, with a leopard skin on her back and a hissing spotted snake as a headband, who does not tear apart a calf or goat, as one would expect, but swings a live leopard cub on its tail (Fig. 22).[63]

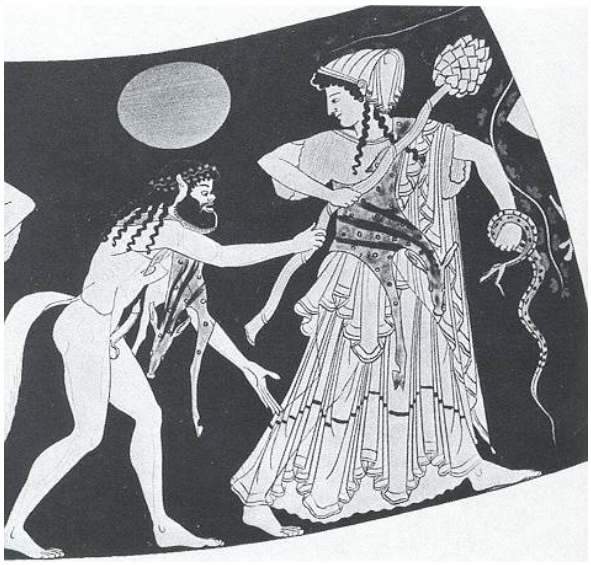

Fig. 21. Maenad and Satyr, dressed in fawnskin, Greek amphora from 6th-century BC (Krauskopf et al. 1999: VIII.Fig. 36)

Fig. 22. Dancing Maenad dressed in leopard-skin, Byrgos painter (c.490-480 BC) (Krauskopf et al. 1999: VIII.Fig. 7).

[60] For visual representation of this ecstatic act of tearing apart live animals in Greek pottery, see Bérard and Bron (1989:147-49). A rereading of *Bacchae* in the light of Greek visual arts is offered by March (1989).
[61] See Kovacs 2002:[pages] 15, 21, 23, 25, 27, 33, 79, 93.
[62] See Krauskopf et al. 1999 for the examples of Maenads dressed in spotted fawn skins (Figs. 36, 45, 65), dressed in leopard skins (Figs. 8, 12, 22, 38, 46, 62, 64, 71, 92), dressed in spotted garments (Figs. 54, 95). Three more examples of Maenads dressed in fawn skins appear in Gaspari and Veneri (1986:Dionysos 33, 38, 284). The presence of different animals has been pointed out before (Carpenter 1993:191, 194-95), yet not thoroughly discussed in the light of the symbolic significance of the leopard.
[63] The image is reprinted on the frontispiece of Simon (1978), and also catalogued in Krauskopf et al. (1999:Mainades 7). The original is kept in Munich's Glyptothek, Antikensammlung No. 2645. There are at least two more Greek vases showing Maenads swinging live leopard cubs (Krauskopf et al. 1999:Mainades Fig. 63; Gaspari and Veneri 1986:Dionysos 297).

This association of Maenad insanity with the leopard also spills over into the representation of Dionysus, who is often grouped together with some Maenads in Greek art. Mostly, he wears a leopard skin himself, or is seated on a throne covered with leopard fur. Moreover, he is often shown riding leopards or accompanied by leopards pulling his chariot or assisting him in fighting.[64] Bacchus' attachment to the leopard is also recorded in Etruscan pottery, in Roman mosaics and in medieval manuscript illustrations.[65] The same topos features prominently in some of the greatest Renaissance masterpieces on the theme. On the portrait of *St John as Bacchus* in the Louvre, which has been ascribed to Leonardo da Vinci (Heydenreich 1954:2.211), a composed Bacchus is displayed within an idyllic forest, stark naked except for a piece of leopard skin strategically placed over his loins. Also in Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* (1520-23) (Hope 2003:105), Bacchus' chariot is drawn by a pair of spotted cats which have evoked considerable criticism among art critics.[66] Interestingly, there is reason to believe that this displacement of the Maenads' spotted hinds with leopards did not pass unnoticed by Renaissance audiences, but was in fact received as a meaningful variation on the classical myth. The natural historian Conrad Gesner, for example, suggests that Bacchus' leopards or panthers are symbolically interchangeable with both Maenad's hinds as well as with other types of variegated clothing, all of which signify a corruption of the human wearing such a pattern:

> Bacchus was also called Nebrides, because he wore the skinne of a hinde-Calfe, *which is spotted almost like a Panther*: and therefore a fearefull man, or a drunken, variable and inconstant man, *is said to weare a skinne of divers colours*. (Topsell 1607:585, emphasis added)

With Conrad Gesner and in other Renaissance sources, the Plinian leopard, a symbol of degeneracy and moral decay, often alternates with a Dionysian leopard or tiger, which stands for pagan worship, drunkenness, delusion and insanity. The "yauling Maenades" and "Bacchus[']franticke priestes" seem to have been well-known figures in Renaissance culture.[67] Shakespeare, for example, several times refers to "the Egyptian Bacchanals" (*ANT* 2.7.98) and to "[t]he riot of the tipsy bacchanals, / Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage" (*MND* 5.1.48-49). Renaissance authors likewise comment on the link between the madness of the Maenads and the felines accompanying Dionysius' train. Francis Bacon's *De Sapientia Veterum* (1609), translated by Arthur Gorges as *The*

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[64] See Gaspari and Veneri (1986) for representations of Dionysus wearing leopard skin (Figs. 311, 312, 474, 615, 621), sitting on leopard skin (Figs. 333, 335, 374, 499), with a leopard at his feet (Figs. 283, 611, 719), riding a leopard (Figs. 430, 433, 521), driving a chariot pulled by leopards (Figs. 458, 660), or engaging in a fight assisted by a leopard (Fig. 628).

[65] See the 5th century Etruscan vase showing Dionysus riding a leopard in Cristofani (1986: Fufluns 4). Gasparri (1986) compiles various Roman reliefs, mosaics and wallpaintings showing Bacchus in a chariot pulled by felines (Fig. 87), with a leopard cub at his feet (Fig. 157), cuddling up to a leopard (Fig. 158), riding a tiger (Fig. 136, 174, 258), with a leopard assisting in battle (Fig. 230), and with sometimes indistinguishable leopards, lions or tigers accompanying his triumphal train (Figs. 242, 244, 245, 246, 250, 251). On an illuminated manuscript of *Ovide moralisé* (1370-90), a horned Bacchus rides a spotted leopard which, as it is typical of medieval iconography, has a dragon-like head, a feline body and reptile-like claws (Emmerling-Skala 1994:2.Fig. 20).

[66] There has been some controversy over why in this particular paiting Titian should have opted for leopards (or, as some art critcs suppose, cheetahs) rather than for tigers, which usually pull Dionysus' chariot in classical sources (Emmerling-Skala 1994:684-86). However, as Andreas Emmerling-Skala fittingly notes (idem), this deviation from classical iconography does not necessarily possess any semantic meaning, especially since – to paraphrase Michel Pastoureau (1995) – tigers, leopards, cheetahs (and jaguars, for that matter) mostly occupy the same iconographic and symbolic space. I would like to thank Bruce Lawder for drawing my attention to Titian's leopards. Notice that the allegorical function of the spotted cat in the Ariadne myth has been extensively researched by Nagel (1993) and Köhn (1999). I would like to thank Francesca Broggi for pointing out these two valuable studies.

[67] The quotes are from George Daniel's *Polylogia* (1638-40) and Spenser's *Shepheardes Calendar* (*OED*, "maenad" n. A).

wisedome of the ancients (1619), draws an analogy between the "passion", "perturbation", "fury" and "madness" evoked by Bacchus and his wine on the one hand, and the tigers pulling the chariot on the other:

> [D]esire never rests content with what it hath, but with an infinite and unsatiable appetite still covets and gapes after more. His [Baccus'] Chariot is also well said to be drawen by Tygers: for as soone as any affection shall from going afoot be advanc't to ride in a Chariot *and shall captivate reason, and leade her in a triumph*, it growes cruell untamed, and fierce, against whatsoever withstands or opposeth it (Gorges 1619:112).

Seeking a strong image to illustrate the power human emotions wield over rational thinking, Bacon resorts to the figure of Bacchus and his tigers, whom he likens to an irresistible force overwhelming "whatsoever withstands or opposeth it". Bacon's image of tame tigers celebrating Bacchus' triumph is reminiscent of other contemporary texts (such as Titian's painting above) in which colonial desire is encoded in emblems of domesticated exoticism,[68] yet it differs from them in one important aspect. Usually, the public display of exotic creatures signifies an unproblematic display of power and wealth derived from subjugating foreign nations, as in Anthony Munday's masque *Chrysanaleia* (1616).[69] Bacon, however, regards the Dionysian tigers as exerting a destructive influence on the human mind. As a symbol of the corruption of reason by (colonial) desire, it may express the same concern over social change following England's rapid expansion overseas which is frequently voiced at the time.

Crucially, and this closes the circle to the Mauritshuis Fall introduced at the beginning of this chapter, Peter Paul Rubens also worked on this Dionysian tiger shortly before collaborating with Jan Brueghel the Elder on their celebrated work. The theme of Bacchus seems to have followed Rubens throughout his career, as emerges from the fact that we find depictions of the god of wine and his revellers both among Rubens' earliest and latest works.[70] The first of these, the *Bacchanale with Silenus* (c1597-1600) (Jaffé 1989:No. 2), rather clumsily attempts to create an atmosphere of mirth by showing a band of semi-naked male Bacchants carrying each other piggyback on a clearing in the woods. Later versions, however, fill the scene with life by adding distinctive Bacchean attributes, such as rich clusters of grapes, winding vine twigs, massive barrels (Jaffé 1989:Nos. 216, 279, 428, 1342). Rubens also enriches the scenes by introducing various cloven-footed Satyrs, tigers or leopards mingling with the revellers, and – in two versions – a male or female African celebrating with the god of wine (Jaffé 1989:Nos. 279, 428). With the latter of these *Bacchanals* (Fig. 23), a female African is trying to catch the attention of drunken Bacchus, while the European satyr on his left attempts to shield him against establishing closer contact with her rival. That the principal theme of the work is the temptation of Bacchus is not only emphasised by the raised paw of the tiger, which adopts a similar pose as the wrestling leopard in the Brueghel/Rubens collaboration (Fig. 8). The gaze of the

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[68] Bacon himself evokes such a colonial context when asserting that "he [i.e. Bacchus] subiugated the world, even to the uttermost bounds of India. He rode in a chariot drawen with Tygers. There danc't about him certaine deformed hobgoblins called Cobali, Aeratus, and others, yea even the Muses also were some of his followers" (Gorges 1619:108).

[69] See the parading of an affluent, generous 'King of Moors' "gallantly mounted on a golden Leopard" in Anthony Munday's masque *Chrysanaleia* (1616) (Jones 1965:35). Munday's text has been recently edited by Bergeron (1985). For a 19th century copy of an early modern illustration of the spectacle, see Barbour (2003:Fig. 13).

[70] There are more than 50 works by Rubens which deal with the theme of Bacchus (Stephan-Maaser 1992:2).

white-haired, Satan-like Satyr, who is eyeing Bacchus' attachment to the African, and the breast-feeding of monstrous twins in the front, also raise the issue of interethnicity, and the generation of 'corrupted' offspring. As Bacchus' careless spilling of wine (synonymous for his blood, or semen) suggests, he has long since succumbed to this temptation, hence the concerned look on the face of his 'fairer' companion.

Figure 23. Peter Paul Rubens. *Bacchanal* (1616-17) (Alpers 1995:Fig. 88)

As this *Bacchanal* (1616-17) seems to have overlapped with the making of the Mauritshuis Fall (c1617),[71] and since Rubens at the same time happened to complete an extraordinary, life-sized portrait of a middle-aged male African (Jaffé 1989:fig. 428bis), the iconographic links of Bacchus' tiger, Pliny's leopard and the African body appear highly probable. Such an hypothesis is also strengthened by another painting by Rubens shortly preceding the Mauritshuis Fall, entitled the *Four Parts of the World* (1615) (Fig. 24). The work displays four female allegorical figures, representing Europa, Asia, Africa and America, who recline in the brawny arms of their lovers Danube, Ganges, Nile and Rio de la Plata. Significantly, it is only Africa who eyes the interaction between the European toddler, the crocodile and the tiger in the foreground. There is thus again reason to suspect that the striped beast does not simply represent Asia or the Ganges, as critics have generally assumed

[71] Jaffé dates the *Bacchanal* reproduced above in "1616-17" and the Mauritshuis-Fall with "c. 1617" (Jaffé 1989:Fig. 431), which suggests an overlap in the composition of the two works. Some critics date the Mauritshuis-Fall much earlier (1615), which would weaken the link I am proposing here, but would still not invalidate it.

(McGrath 1994:75, Büttner 2004:334), but also the mingling of Europeans and Africans and the dissemination of skin colour among unmarked, 'white' nations.

Figure 24. Peter Paul Rubens. *Four Parts of the World* (1615-16)
(Büttner and Heinen 2004: No. 93)

The sexual innuendos of the *Four Parts of the World* (1615-16) and the *Bacchanal* (1616-17) are continued in Rubens' *Drunken Silenus* (Fig .25), in which an old, bearded Silenus angrily storms away from a languishing African youth holding the god by his buttocks, while assuming a position for performing anal intercourse (Stephan-Maaser 1992:13, 260). Just as this unnatural act is taking place, there is a tiger passing in front of Silenus, holding a giant grape cluster in its mouth and in its right paw, thereby mimicking the African's grabbing of Silenus' flesh. As in the *Four Parts of the World* and in the *Bacchanal* above, the work features the nursing of 'monstrous' offspring in the foreground, which stands for the corruption resulting from the mixing of natural opposites in Bacchean revelry.[72] Rubens' drunken Silenus may thus be seen as opposing the idealised Silenus-figure immortalised in Plato's *Symposion* in several respects. Whereas with Plato, Socrates, who is repeatedly likened to a Silenus-figure in the text (Lamb 1961:215a-b, 221d-222a), steadfastly resists the power of love, drink and sleep, Rubens tells the story of Silenus' fall triggered by the fruit of Dionysus, which turns him into a defiled seeker of the flesh.[73] This fall into drunken lust is associated with 'unnatural' love in a double sense, being an interethnic and a homoerotic act. The erotic aura emanating from Rubens' African points towards a hypersexualisation of colour reflected by the presence of many African

[72] For a more extensive discussion of Rubens' *Druken Silenus* and its iconographic and epistemological roots, see the doctoral dissertation by Reinhild Stephan-Maaser (1992), and the third chapter in Svetlana Alpers' *The Making of Rubens* (1995:101-57).
[73] The relation of Rubens' *Drunken Silenus* to Plato's *Symposium* and to Plato in general is discussed in detail by Stephan-Maaser (1992:52-108).

characters among the Dionysian train with Rubens, as well as with other Renaissance artists (Stephan-Maaser 1992:260-64).

Figure 25. Peter Paul Rubens. *Drunken Silen* (1618) (Reuger and Denk 2002:No.319)

To conclude this foray into the archaeology of Brueghel's and Rubens' iconography, there are multiple ways in which one may see the theme of African-European interaction having a bearing on the Mauritshuis Fall. The staining of Adam by the hands of fallen Eve is paralleled by a symbolic representation of the Plinian fall (or the generation of exotic monsters); by a reference to the monstrous rape of Io (encoded in the Argus-eyed peacock helplessly watching Eve); and finally by the Dionysian fall (encoded by Rubens' tiger, standing for Rubens' African seducers). If there is any validity to the reading suggested above, there are several reasons for considering the Mauritshuis Fall an integral part of what is commonly termed 'colonial discourse'.

Figure 26. *Aethiopem lavare*: Alciato, Andrea. *Emblematum liber*. Augsburg (1531). The Latin text, freely translated, reads: "You are washing an Ethiope, to what avail? oh, refrain! No-one may illuminate the dark shadows of the night."

The Leper

Leprosi cum sanis habitare non possunt [*Third Lateral Council* (1179)]
(Keil 1980:1.1251)

The notorious proverb *you cannot wash an Ethiopian white*, and its biblical equivalent *Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?* (Jer 13:23), are widely believed to range among the most enduring 'racist' catchphrases in the Western tradition.[1] The proverbial impossibility of 'cleansing' dark skin is echoed by various authors promoting colonial and imperial enterprises, including Edward Long, a prominent 18th century planter violently opposed to curtailing the 'rights' of plantation owners, Rudyard Kipling, godfather of the 'White Man's Burden', and Thomas Dixon, the best-known champion of the Ku Klux Klan.[2] The saying is also exploited in several eighteenth and nineteenth century illustrations deriding Africans as dull-witted, bestial, and unable to attain 'white' sophistication.[3] The proverb's influence on fostering and consolidating anti-abolitionist, segregationist and racist notions of African inferiority has also been pointed out by those fighting such discriminatory rhetoric over the last few centuries. Thomas Tyron identifies the proverb as characteristic of the speech of ruthless slave holders in his *Friendly Advice to the Gentlemen-Planters of the East and West Indies* (1684) (Krise 1999:54), and the proverb is also discussed in the writings of several 18th and 19th century African-Americans, including Prince Hall, Joseph Sidney, and Frederick Douglass.[4] In the late 20th century, numerous studies on the making of 'race' have used the saying as an unambiguous indicator of colour prejudice. Adaptations of the proverb in text and image have been reproduced in provocative titles and illustrations in studies intending to expose the prevalence of a widely-disseminated bias in early modern thought, and the staggering number of sources in which the phrase appears (see Appendix 2) seems to prove their case.[5]

Since most studies discussing the proverb have been primarily concerned with documenting the spread of colour bias rather than Western iconography and symbolism, virtually none of them – one notable study excepted (Prager 1987) – have scrutinised the deictic and symbolic code by which adaptations of the saying operate. Considered as an obvious marker of colour prejudice, the proverb is seen as requiring no further elaboration. Therefore, it has usually been presented as evidence of the

[1] Since in Renaissance texts the two sayings are used interchangeably and coalesce into one idiom, they will be analysed as such in this chapter. A collection of references to both versions of the proverb are attached as Appendix 2.
[2] Rudyard Kipling's "How the leopard got his spots" (1901, reprinted in *Just So Stories* 1912) and Thomas Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots: A Romance of the White Man's Burden 1865-1900* (1902) both employ the biblical variant of the saying (Jer 13:23) as the underlying rationale for their narratives. Edward Long's usage appears in an attack on the British judiciary for allegedly favouring Africans over planters: "The invention of printing has been ascribed to a soldier, of gunpowder to a priest; perhaps the longitude may be discovered by a taylor; *but the art of washing the Black-a-moor white was happily reserved for a lawyer*" (emphasis mine, *Candid Reflections* (1772) iii, quoted in Thomas (2000:20)).
[3] See also the nasty illustrations reprinted in Walvin (1973:179), Blakely (1993:75, 169) and Newman (1987:141).
[4] Prince Hall, "A Charge to the African Lodge" June 24, 1797 (Porter 1971:71), Joseph Sidney, "An Oration, Commemorative of the Abolition" January 2, 1809 (Porter 1971:362), Frederick Douglass, *Life and Writings* (1881) 4.347.
[5] Compare the reprints of the adaptation from Geoffrey Whitney's *Choice of Emblemes* (1586) in Lyons (1975:book cover), Hall (1995:68), Newman (1987:141), Vaughan (1995:163) and Vaughan and Vaughan (1997:37). The adage also serves as a title in Stanton (1960), Lyons (1975), Newman (1987) and as chapter titles in Hall (1995) and Barthélémy (1987). The history of the proverb's dissemination in the Renaissance has been meticulously documented by Massing (1995).

crudest sort, and has seldom been used as a medium for furthering the understanding of the making of colonial discourse.

Rather startingly, though, the adaptation in Andrea Alciato's *Emblematum liber* (1531) reproduced here (Fig. 26) thwarts the expectations raised by the proverb's 'racist' reputation. Even though the Latin text faithfully reproduces Erasmus' lines from the *Adagia* (Phillips 1982:1.4.50), and speaks of the vain attempt to 'cleanse' an 'Aethiopian', the accompanying woodcut rather oddly shows a physician with his assistant attending to a 'white' patient. To the reader familiar with the making of the *Emblematum liber* (1531), such a discrepancy between image and text seems perhaps more understandable. After all, the collection of epigrams compiled by Andrea Alciato was originally intended to be published as a pure text collection, and was only subsequently enriched with woodcuts, nota bene without the author's consent. Alciato openly voiced his misgivings about the unauthorised woodcuts, especially since the illustrator had occasionally missed the point of a proverb, or had supplied an adage with an already existing woodcut in order to save on time and expenditure.[6] Whatever the particular circumstances behind the editing of the page reproduced above, it seems rather peculiar that the printer should have settled for a *European* patient lying supine on a sickbed, whose facial features, straight hair and white complexion do not even remotely hint at an African.[7] Ironically, this blunder even lends an unintended, subversive pun to the caption itself, for it is truly *impossible* to recognise the patient as an "Aethiops" without any reference to the text.

Then again, the illustrator's *faux pas*, whatever its origins, points towards a topos which has hitherto been largely ignored in studies of early modern discourse: the reading of skin colour as disease. There are indeed several Renaissance adaptations of the proverb which endorse the association which the 'faulty' illustration in the *Emblematum liber* visualises. The Scotsman James Melville (c1600), for instance, speaks of the futility of "washing of *sick* Moores" (Whiting 1951:100), while the Anglican clergyman Thomas Adams in a sermon entitled *The Blacke Devill* (1615) lectures on the impossibility to "metamorphose Satans posions, […] [to] wash the Blak-more[']s skin white, and [to] *make leprosies faire and sound*" (Prager 1987: 262-263). The same displacement of skin colour with disease also occurs with more prominent authors of the self-same period. John Calvin's *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah and the Lamentations*, for instance, interpret Jeremiah's metaphor of the Ethiopian's unchangeable skin as a reference to the state of habitual sin to which humans accustom themselves, and which governs them like an 'incurable disease' (Owen 1850-55:Jer 13:23). By further elaborating on the parallels between physical disease, mental disease and sin,

[6] Although distancing himself from the first "pirated" Augsburg edition (1531) with its "crude" woodcuts, Alciato eventually approved a later Paris edition (1536) by Christian Wechsel (Graham 1998:214). For concise biographical notes on Alciato's life see the introduction prefaced to the first volume of Daly's authoritative index (1985:not paginated). A concise history of the *Liber Emblematum* (1531) and its subsequent editions is provided by Saunders (1988:97-101).

[7] Notice that several wonderful, life-like portraits of Africans by European artists had appeared before the *Emblematum liber*, such as Albrecht Dürer's admirable "Portrait of a black man" (1508) and his "Portrait of Katharina" (1521), reprinted in Bugner 2.2.Figs. 264, 263.

Calvin not only testifies to the importance of metaphors of disease in exegesis, but also reveals a predilection for pathologising somatic difference which is typical of his age.

This element of disease which these texts project onto the African is already present in the earliest extant version of the proverb 'to wash an Ethiopian white', though in a quite different form. In the 'Aesopian' fable generally believed to have given rise to the proverb,[8] illness is not the patient's original condition, but rather the result of being maltreated by the hands of the 'physician'. In 'Aesop', the foolish owner of a newly-bought African slave actually makes the African sick with his effort to rub off the 'stain' on his skin:

He took him home and used all kinds of soap on him and tried all kinds of baths to clean him up. He couldn't change his colour, but he made him sick with all his efforts. [Nature remains as it used to be.][9] (Perry 1965:no. 393)

In a curious twist, Renaissance texts after Erasmus significantly alter the roles of the original narrative. Michel Montaigne in his essay *On the resemblance between children and fathers*, for instance, paraphrases the 'Aesopian' to illustrate his point that physicians often endanger their patients by administering harmful medicine, which may in extreme cases even lead to their patients' death (Florio 1603:2.37.442). With Montaigne and with many other contemporaries, the hapless 'Ethiopian' victim becomes a sick patient, while the daft master turns into a compassionate physician. As a result, the foolhardy attempt to remove his servant's skin is rehabilitated as a well-meant effort to relieve the African from his inner suffering.

Once cause and effect have been reversed, the symbolic meaning attached to the removal of skin colour undergoes a significant transformation. While the earliest Greek sources still speak of a 'rubbing' or 'scrubbing' of the African, early Patristic authors fashion this into a 'washing',[10] a symbolic act which in a Christian context also stands for the administering of the sacrament of baptism, and for the freeing from original sin. Jerome, for instance, retells the salvation of humankind through Christ's self-sacrifice through the image of washing off dark skin colour:

People of the Ethiopians means those who are black, being covered with the stain of sin. In the past we were Ethiopians, being made so by our sins and vices. How? Because sin had made us black. But then we heeded Isaiah [Isa 1:16] – 'Wash yourselves, be clean' – and we said, 'Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow' [Ps 50[51]:9]. Thus we, Ethiopians that we were, transformed ourselves and became white. (Courtès 1979:27)

The impossibility of washing an Ethiopian white, then, also possesses a spiritual dimension. Indeed, it seems no coincidence that on the *Emblematum liber*'s woodcut, the physician's sprinkling of water appears more ceremonious than functional, and resembles a spiritual cleansing rather than the painful scrubbing featured on the illustrations of later editions.[11] The same spiritual subtext is also preserved

[8] Notice that the fable is now generally thought to be Aphthonius' (early 4th c. AD) rather than Aesop's.
[9] The final sentence is missing in Perry (1965), but is included in Schnur's (1978) reprint of Halm (1863).
[10] As Lutz Röhrich (1973:1134) correctly notes, many Greek versions speak of 'rubbing an Ethiopian' (Αίφίοπα σμήχειν). The change from pagan authors, who speak mostly of a 'rubbing', to the 'washing' in patristic writing, is reflected in the examples provided in the *Thesaurus Proverbiorum Medii Aevi* ("Mohr" 2).
[11] On the interpretation of the physician's gesture, notice that John Calvin and others regard the sprinkling of water as a perfectly satisfactory method of baptising someone: "And whether the Baptized be dipped in water, and that once or thrise, or have the water sprinkled or powred upon him, it is a matter indifferent, and oought to be free in the Church according to the

in the earliest adaptation printed in the English language by Geoffrey Whitney (1586). Whereas Whitney's *Choice of Emblemes* (1586:57) speaks of the "skowring" or scrubbing of skin colour, the accompanying etching (Fig. 27) truly visualises a mere symbolic 'showering' of the African body.[12] Analogous to the duality involved in this physical and spiritual cleansing, darkness is often situated both without and within the African body. If the Ethiopian cannot be washed, Whitney's illustration implies, this is not just because his colour is too durable; rather, it is very much the reluctance on behalf of the 'patient' which frustrates any attempt at 'curing' his body or mind.[13]

Figure 27. From Geoffrey Whitney's *Choice of Emblemes* (1586:57)
The first line of the accompanying text reads: "Leave of[f] with paine,
the blackamore to *skowre*, […]" (emphasis added)

The duality inherent in the 'skowring' and 'showering' of the African body points towards a pathologising of non-Europeans which is twofold, and based on an othering of physical and mental properties. The vilifying of colonial subjects as mentally deficient is a well-known cliché and does not need to be reiterated here in detail. As Charles H. Lyons' study on *British ideas about Black African educability* (1975) has shown, notions of 'racial inferiority' may be traced back to Elizabethan and Jacobean texts denouncing Africans as 'dull', 'mad', and lacking the mental capacities of learned Englishmen, if not even further.[14] Charles H. Lyons stresses the fact that the spread of such views is difficult to assess, mostly because Renaissance texts fail to operate with the kind of terminology used in modern assessments of human intelligence and mental sanity (Lyons 1975:16-19). In spite of such

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diversitie of countreys" (1596: 24.8.141). Notice also the biblical analogies of baptising the ill, as e.g. Namaan's curing from leprosy through bathing in the river Jordan (2 Kings 5:1-14).

[12] Similarly to Alciato's forerunner, Whitney's *Choice of Emblemes* (1586) also represents a collaborative work. The woodcuts added were those of the Dutch printer Plantin, who re-used more than 200 illustrations found in other emblem editions of his (Henkel and Schöne 1967:lxviii).

[13] This point of resistance on behalf of the one being scrubbed is accentuated even more in the anonymous 18th century illustration in Walvin (1973:179), on which a grotesque male figure placed in a giant bathtub is only approached by washing maids armed with long brushes, signifying the danger emanating from his hypersexualised physicality.

[14] See also the stereotyping of the African as the madman in German medieval literature as analysed by Gilman (1985:142-44).

difficulties, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that biased views of 'dull' Africans often prevailed; however, since "the idea of intelligence was intimately connected with the spiritual nature of man" (Lyons 1975:17), it is obvious that a similar prejudice would have been borne towards any other non-Christian nation, regardless of its ethnic background.

While several studies have analysed the Renaissance stereotyping of the African or the exotic colonial subject as the madman, the association with physical disease is one aspect of the pathologisation of colour which has been sorely neglected in Renaissance studies. The reason for this absence seems partly related to the relative scarcity of Renaissance texts making this semiotic link of colour with illness explicit. Therefore, Winthrop Jordan in his landmark study *White over Black* (1968) only cautiously refers to "an ancient, vague tradition" of associating somatic difference with leprosy, which according to him flares up intermittently in the Western tradition. The textual references Jordan cites are indeed separated by enormous time gaps. Jordan names among the writers proposing such an argument the 16th century Frenchman Jean Bodin, the 17th century Dutch explorer Isaac Vos, and the late 18th century American physician Benjamin Rush (1968:519.n.13). Curiously, though, Jordan's hypothesis of such an elusive tradition does not seem to have been adequately pursued in any of the major studies on colour in the 16th and 17th centuries. The following pages do not claim to offer a final verdict on the viability of Jordan's claim; nevertheless, they hope to show that the association of skin colour with disease would have been common currency in Renaissance culture. Furthermore, they aim to document that scientific arguments interpreting colour as a symptom of leprosy would have been easily accessible in Renaissance England, first and foremost through the writings of Jean Bodin, but also via other sources perpetuating and expanding on Bodin's theory.[15]

Perhaps the best approach to understanding the pathologisation of colour in the Renaissance is to remind oneself of the classical and medieval doctrine which such a theory displaced. Prior to the discovery of the New World, medieval scholars unanimously adhere to the Greek and Roman idea that only climate, or more precisely, geographical latitude, determines skin colour. As the term *Ethiopian* (Gk. *aithiops*, i.e. 'burnt face') suggests, Africans were frequently perceived as having been scorched by the sun,[16] and the self-same idea is preserved in a dense textual legacy stretching from Isidore to the

[15] The importance of Jean Bodin and his *Méthode* (1565) for the development of Renaissance notions on non-European physiognomy and subsequent 'racial' categorisations has also been hinted at by Ivan Hannaford (1996:155-57) and by Ania Loomba (2000:201n.17), yet without offering any substantial analysis.

[16] See the following explanation from Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos*: "For while the region which we inhabit is in one of the northern quarters, the people who live under the more southern parallels, that is, those from the equator to the summer tropic, since they have the sun over their heads and are burned by it, have black skins and thick, wolly hair, are contracted in form and shrunken in stature, are sanguine in nature, and in habits are for the most part savage because their homes are continually oppressed by heat; we call them by the general name Ethiopians" (Goold 1980:2.2.55-56).

late Middle Ages.[17] Classical and medieval scholars often think of colour as an unstable condition which gradually wears off if a person moves to a Northern climate. John Trevisa's translation of Bartholomew Anglicus, for example, affirms: "[I]n temperate contrees and londes that beth somdele colde, blo ['blue'] men geteth children temperate in colour, as Macrobius, Aristotil and Avicenne meneth" (Seymour 1975:21.9.1282-83). Such myths are of course disproved in the age of discovery, as baffled explorers discover (comparatively) light-skinned peoples in South America and in the highlands of Ethiopia, and much darker nations in the more temperate zones near the Cape of Good Hope.[18]

With their traditional paradigm shattered, Elizabethans find themselves in a metaphysical void in which various theories are proposed, yet none wholeheartedly believed in. John Lok, reprinted in Richard Eden's compilation (1555), rather helplessly attributes the making of colour to a "secreate woorke of nature" (360v), and several geographers after him share the same kind of confusion. Samuel Purchas, for instance, enumerates various theories, yet eventually finds them all wanting. According to Purchas, colour has been variously ascribed to geographical latitude, to heat, to the "drynesse of the earth", to "hidden qualities of the soile", to "the blacknesse of the Parents['] sperme", or to "heavenly constellation and influence", yet without rendering a satisfactory answer (1613:6.14.545-46). Amid the speculations Renaissance explorers, geographers, natural scientists and theologians offer on the subject, there are three main theories which keep resurfacing at regular intervals: first, the reading of colour as the biblical curse by Noah on Ham's offspring; second, colour as a 'monstrous' condition emanating from the female body and mind; and third, the diagnosing of colour as an illness or disease. The pathologisation of colour described below, therefore, does not represent the only reading of colour prevalent at the time, but merely one version which constantly interacts with a plurality of alternative texts.

Even though these alternative readings greatly differ from each other with respect to the physiological explanation they propose, they employ a similar imagery irrespective of the scientific belief they subscribe to. Colour is unanimously viewed as a condition resulting from a moral or physiological 'fall' incurred by a prelapsarian white ancestor which has been transmitted from one generation to the next. Significantly, these images of the 'African as the fallen' are by no means novel in themselves, but merely adaptations of a much older topos already present in classical texts. As Ovid

[17] See Isidore's *Etymologies* (Lindsay 1911:14.5.14): "Aethiopia dicta a colore populorum, quos solis vicinitas torret" ('Ethiopia derives its name from the colour of its inhabitants, who are burnt by their proximity to the sun', translation mine). Isidore's definition reverberates throughout medieval writing, as e.g. in Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon*, translated by John Trevisa: "That partie [...] hatte Ethiopia of the colour and hewe of the men of the lond, that beth blewe [i.e. 'black'] men, and is for gret brennynge and hete of the sonne, that is hem ful nyh" (Babington 1865:1.157-159).

[18] On the discrepancies between the demography of colour and climate, see Eden (1555:360v), Best (1578:28), Bateman (1582:15.87.251r), Pory (1600:36), Purchas (1613:6.14.545). The point is expressed most forcefully by George Best (1578): "[I]f the *Ethiopians['] blacknesse* came by the heate of the Sun, why should not those *Americans* and *Indians* also bee as blacke as they, seeying the Sunne is equally distant from them both[?]" (28). Later on, Best adds that "black men are found in all partes of Africa, [...] even unto Capo d'buono Speranza Southward, where, by reason of the Sphere, should be the same temperature as is in Spayne, Laddigna, and Sicilia, where all be of very good complexions" (32).

mentions in passing in the *Metamorphoses*, the 'scorching' of the 'Ethiopians' (or the 'burnt faces') did not just result by chance, but was actually triggered by the plummeting of Phäeton's sun-chariot onto the earth. Arthur Golding's translation of Ovid renders the passage as follows:

> The Aethiopians at that time (as men for truth upholde)
> (The bloud by force of that same heate drawne to the outer part
> And there adust from that time forth) became so blacke and swart. (Golding 1574:2.299-301).

This notion of Africans being 'scorched' by the fervent southern sun remains widespread in English literature throughout the Renaissance. In *Tottel's Miscellany* (1557), Nicholas Grimald relates how "flaming Phebus, passing through his heavenly region hye, / The uttrest Ethiopian folk with fervent beams doth frye" (Rollins 1966:1.101.35-36), and various later authors continue to peruse a similar kind of imagery,[19] also long after the climate theory no longer serves as an authoritative scientific rationale.

Strangely, the woodcut from the *Emblematum liber* omits this very common element of a 'burnt' skin, yet it reproduces another element pertaining to the Phaëton myth, namely the fall. Lying supine on his sickbed, the suffering 'Ethiope' is represented as somebody who has literally collapsed to the floor. Even though this 'Ethiopian' has not yet lost his primordial white hue, he shows every sign of being afflicted with a disease weakening his body, a medical condition the text associates with his skin colour.[20] This concept of the 'African as the fallen' may bear several subtexts. Africans are for instance widely believed to be prone to the so-called 'falling sickness' or epilepsy, due to their 'melancholic' bodies.[21] In the widespread narrative of Ham's mocking of Noah, close-read in the following chapter, it is allegedly the moral fall of the first African ancestor which brought the 'curse' of skin colour into the world. And, finally, these notions of a physical and moral fall also have a bearing on texts denouncing Africans as 'leprous', since in the Western tradition leprosy is widely believed to constitute a divine punishment for illicit sexual pleasure.

Moreover, the idea that Africans inhabit 'fallen' bodies bears the hallmark of the Renaissance epistemology upon which the making of different ethnicities is conceived. Instead of regarding Africans as a different biological 'race', as late 18th and 19th century anthropologists do, Renaissance thinkers imagine the African as a fallen (hu)man. As already outlined in the Introduction (pages 20-21), postulating a polygenetic origin of humankind, as for example the Frenchman Isaac de la Peyrère does in 1655, constitutes a heresy which is unthinkable in both Elizabethan and Jacobean England. Instead, Renaissance texts unequivocally affirm that all humans, including "Egyptians, Moores &

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[19] See for instance the Prince of Morocco's description of his skin colour as "the shadowy livry of the burnished sun / To whom I am neighbour and near bred" (*MV* 2.1.2-3). Probably the most comprehensive listing of the imagery of burning employed by 16th and 17th-century writers is offered by Joshua Poole in the entry "Ethiopian or Moore" in his thesaurus-like reference work entitled *The English Parnassus* (1657): "Sun-burnt, swarthy, sooty, soultry, scalded, broyled, scorched, […], bak'd, […], rosted, fried, […]" (90).

[20] The illustration is also reminiscent of the ominous, white "pre-Phaëton" Africans William Basse describes in his allegorical poem *Urania, or The Woman in the Moon* (c1612) (Hall 1995:62-63).

[21] For a discussion of Renaissance beliefs on epilepsy and colour, see the chapter on *Othello*.

Ethiopians […] [,] had their originall out of the loynes of Adam; but […] as men in their minds did grow monstrous, so God did turne the course of nature to breed monsters among them" (Wilkinson 1607:42).[22] In their fallen state, there is still hope, in Samuel Purchas' (1613) often-quoted words, that the "tawney Moore, black Negro, Duskie Libyan, ash-coloured Indian [and] olive-coloured American, [will] with the whiter Europaean become one sheepe-fold, under one great shepheard" (6.14.546). This union, however, may only be effected by remedying the "accidents" or individual falls which have severed non-European nations from the distinctly "whiter European[s]". After all, it is only by "being made *white* in the bloud of the Lambe" that they will have "the Fathers name written in their foreheads" (*idem*, emphasis added).[23]

Renaissance theories accounting for the origin of the marker of this fallen state are often phrased in deliberately vague terms. The traveller George Best, for instance, speaks of colour as a "natural infection of [the] bloud" whose exact nature, however, remains mysteriously unknown (1578:29, 32). As in his in make-shift version of the curse on Ham, where he sloppily conflates Canaan and Chus into one (1578:31), Best seems to rely on hearsay and popular lore rather than on any textual authority.[24] Quite possibly, the idea of colour as a disease may have been inspired by a phobia against the "infectious and contagious ayres" of tropical climates (1578:19) which Best and many other contemporaries seem to have shared (Kupperman 1984). Then again, the imagery of pathology may also have been inspired by the desire to segregate supposedly 'healthy' Europeans from mingling with 'diseased' colonial subjects. Even though there is not sufficient evidence to substantiate such a claim with respect to George Best, the more extensive writings by Jean Bodin contain an argument which ultimately leads to such a conclusion. Bodin's image of the African as the leper, it seems, represents a powerful figure of speech to consolidate the concept of a colour line which is of great importance to the anglophone tradition, both legally and epistemologically. Apart from implying a need for social distance, the image of leprosy also bears a sexual innuendo, since in Renaissance culture lepers are widely believed to derive their illness from lecherous deeds. The topos of the 'leprous African', then, evokes multiple subtexts of discrimination, which makes it such an effective tool for 'othering' colonial subjects.

For the sake of understanding the curious kind of 'logic' of Bodin's argument more thoroughly, the following pages shall begin by close-reading a similar interpretation of colour as leprosy proposed roughly two centuries later by the American physician Benjamin Rush (1745-1813).

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[22] Wilkinson here merely rehearses a long-established article of belief, voiced e.g. in Augustine's *The City of God*: "Whoever is born anywhere as a human being, that is, as a rational mortal creature, however strange he may appear to our senses in bodily form or colour of motion or utterance, or in any faculty, part of quality of his nature whatsoever, let no true believer have any doubt that such an individual is descended from the one man who was first created" (Sanford 1965:16.8, also quoted in Friedman 1981:91). For further examples of the belief in a unified mankind among English travel writers, see Jordan (1968:22-23).

[23] For discussions of the same passage, see Jordan (1968:12-13) and Washburn (1997:171).

[24] On the confusion of Ham and Canaan in early modern versions of the myth of Noah's curse, see the following chapter "The Lecher" (pages 117).

Even though an analysis of Rush's text cannot illuminate the train of thoughts penned down by Bodin two hundred years earlier, a closer look at the structure of his argument and at his ulterior motives seems justified, since they offer a tailor-made introduction to the thoughts Bodin develops on the subject. With Benjamin Rush we are in the fortunate situation of being able to read his theory against the background of a well-historicised colonial context, which greatly facilitates understanding the dynamics and texture of pathologising colour as leprosy. With Jean Bodin, the actual effect of his theory on the colonial enterprises of his day is somewhat more difficult to assess, given the fragmentary historicals records at the time. Nevertheless, since Bodin's texts were available to an English readership, his ties with the anglophone tradition are worth following up in more detail.

Rush's argument occurs in the much-cited, yet surprisingly little-understood "Observations intended to favour a supposition that the Black Color […] is derived from the Leprosy", read to the American Philosophical Society on 14th July 1797, and printed in the Society's *Transactions* two years later.[25] Despite being lauded as "the most important teacher that American medicine had produced up to 1820" (Carlson, Wollock and Noel 1981:15), Rush seems to have been far more influenced by classical and medieval authorities than by the more progressive scientists of his day. In contrast to the Académie Française, which attempts to explain human physiology through a plethora of scientific data, Rush appears most unwilling to commit himself to any empirical approach at all. While the *Encyclopédie*'s informants on the properties of skin colour become regularly entangled in a quagmire of biochemichal complexities,[26] Rush skips all such considerations and contemplates instead in very general terms what kind of scientific, social and political implications a 'leprous' quality of dark skin colour would entail. The core structure of Rush's short "Observations" is roughly as follows: Having pointed out that black and white colours are often described as leprosies in the Old Testament, in medieval texts as well as in more recent travel reports, he quotes a passage from Joseph Hawkins' *History of a Voyage to the Coast of Africa* (1797), according to which African albinism "*may perhaps* be ascribed to disease, and that of the leprous kind" (1799:291, emphasis added). Rush then perfunctorily consolidates this hypothesis by citing a colleague of his who "concurs with Mr. Hawkins in ascribing this morbid whiteness […] *wholly* [!] to the leprosy" (1799:291, emphasis added). After that, in a sudden, unexpected leap, he goes on to claim that the 'blackness' in ordinary African skin too *must* constitute a leprous condition which "has in a great degree ceased to be infectious" (1799:294). Finally, Rush considers at length what measures ought to be taken in case colour should truly be 'leprous' in kind.

The 'evidence' Rush presents for shoring up the 'leprous' quality of 'black' colour appears not only utterly haphazard by any scientific standard, but also highly inappropriate for the staunch

[25] In the *Transactions* (1799:289), the year of the presentation is mistakenly stated as 1792, a misprint reproduced in Winthrop Jordan (1968:518). The correct year of 1797 emerges clearly from Rush's letter to Thomas Jefferson dated 4th February 1797 (Butterfield 1951:II.786), and is also confirmed by the date "17th June 1797" added at the end of the paper.
[26] See the entries "Nègre" and "Peau des nègres" in Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* (1751-80:11.76-83; 12.215-17).

abolitionist he purports to be. The leprous condition of dark skin is first of all 'deduced' from Louis Antoine de Bougainville's (1729-1811) description of a "leper island" in the Pacific, whose natives (described as "negroes and mulattoes") are said to be strongly infected with leprosy (1799:292). A further piece of 'evidence' Rush furnishes is the case of Africans suffering from pigment loss (vitiligo) or partial albinism (piebaldism), whose "white and black spots blended together in every part of the body" are said to resemble the skin of lepers.[27] Rush then reiterates the widespread myth of the 'thickness' of African skin, and claims that Africans are almost completely insensitive to physical pain, just like lepers, who experience "a morbid insensibility in the nerves" (1799:292). Rush expands on this point by – rather absurdly – maintaining that "[t]hey bear surgical operations much better than white people", and he cites on this point the physician Benjamin Moseley, who had purportedly "amputated the legs of many negroes, who have held the upper part of the limb themselves" (1799:292). Such grotesque clichées of African insensitivity are of course by no means unique for the time. Charles White, for instance, quotes the self-same Moseley as claiming that "Negroes, […], whatever the cause may be, are void of sensibility to a surprising degree", and allegedly "sleep sound in every disease[;] nor does any mental disturbance ever keep them awake" (White 1799:74). Similarly, Christoph Girtanner, one of Blumenbach's students, argues that Africans can hold glowing coals in their hands without sensing pain, and cynically adds that "their tanned skin is so thick that – just like oxen's skin – it could serve for making soles of shoes" (1796:109-110). By emulating such language, though, Benjamin Rush aligns himself with a group of late 18th century 'anthropologists' whose real intentions, to put it mildly, are neither scientific nor favourable to the 'African cause' Rush purports to espouse.

Undeterred by the revolting images he has presented, Rush continues by claiming that the stereotypical African physical attributes such as 'big lips', 'flat noses' and 'wool' are in themselves features which ought to be regarded as symptoms of leprosy (1799:293). To top it all, Rush even invokes the notorious myth that Africans, just like lepers,

> are remarkable for having strong venereal desires. This is universal among the negroes, hence their uncommon fruitfulness when they are not depressed by slavery; but even slavery in its worst state does not always subdue the venereal appetite, for after whole days, spent in hard labor in a hot sun in the West Indies, the black men often walk five or six miles to comply with a venereal assignation. (1799:292-93)

Of all the stereotypes Rush projects onto the African body, the allegation of being ruled by uncontrollable lust is certainly the one most difficult to reconcile with his status as a self-declared abolitionist. For clearly Rush's hyperbole of the "venereal appetite" driving on African labourers despite their physical exhaustion implicitly vindicates slavery as an acceptable means of suppressing an invincible exotic libido.

[27] On the history of piebaldism, vitiligo and African albinism, see the highly suggestive study by Martin (2002).

Until the late 1960s, historians assessing Rush's attitude to Africans have generally ignored or toned down the harsh rhetoric in his "Observations", and have instead foregrounded Rush's public support of abolition, and his personal assistance to the African community in his native Philadelphia. The historical image of Rush as one of the foremost abolitionists of his time was mainly constructed on the basis of his two anti-slavery pamphlets published in 1773 (Hawke 1971:107-08), his ensuing correspondence with the British abolitionist Granville Sharp (Woods 1967), his function as a secretary and later on as a president of America's first abolitionist society, his sympathy for certain African individuals,[28] and his aid in constructing the first African Episcopal Church of Philadelphia in 1793 (Corner 1948:202,228). However, the image of Rush the paragon abolitionist presented by e.g. Donald J. D'Elia (1969) or by Joseph R. Washington Jr. (1984:499-505) has suffered several cracks ever since David Freeman Hawke's critical biography of the *Revolutionary Gadfly* (1971) appeared. Hawke scrutinises the sincerity of Rush's abolitionist commitment, and notices a considerable discrepancy between Rush's progressive public voice and his personal unwillingness to part with the benefits of the slave system. Born into a slave-holding family, Rush is known to have kept at least one African servant named William, whom he – according to his own testimony – released in 1794, after 10 years of service (Corner 1948:246). However, as Hawke's meticulous examination of Rush's papers shows, Rush must have kept William for at least 18 years, and therefore grossly, and no doubt deliberately, understated the actual length of Williams' service. What is more, under the Pennsylvanian legislation against slave trade, Rush could not have legally purchased William at the point in time he suggested. And "morally[,] he could not have bought him after 1773, the year of his original antislavery pamphlet[s]", as Hawke accurately points out (1971:362).

Hawke further dismantles the cliché of the staunch abolitionist by pointing out that after having published his two pamphlets against slavery in 1773, Rush did not join the abolition society until 14 years later, together with influential figures of the likes of Benjamin Franklin (Hawke 1971:362).[29] In Hawke's biography, Rush emerges as someone joining abolitionism when it was politic to do so, and he is described as an individual repeatedly failing to live up to his own moral ideals. While visibly enjoying presenting himself in public as a benefactor and patron loudly proclaiming that he "even love[d] the name of Africa" (Butterfield 1951:I.482), Rush must have felt highly ambivalent about the role of Africans in society. Crucially, even after joining the abolition society, he could not imagine dispensing with a rigorous system of physical segregation. He may have loved the *name* of Africa, but would not accept Africans on equal terms, neither physically nor

[28] Rush is for example known to have attended several funerals of Africans, and comments favourably on African nurses assisting him in his private correspondence (Butterfield 1951:2.658, 731, Corner 1948:221, 246).

[29] Notice also that Rush in his autobiography addressed to his family bewails the economic losses resulting from printing his anti-slavery pamphlet in 1773: "This publication had an extensive publication, and I believe did some good in removing several errors and prejudices upon the subject of domestic slavery, but it did me harm, by exciting the resentment of many slaveholders against me. It injured me in another way, by giving rise to an opinion that I had meddled with a controversy that was foreign to my business" (Corner 1948:83). Significantly, this remains the only reference to slavery and abolition within his whole autobiography, which Rush intended to be circulated among his family members and his future descendants only.

socially nor politically. While being prepared to make some concessions regarding their personal freedom, Rush adamantly "drew the line at sleeping with them" (Jordan 1968:520).

Consolidating this distinction between lofty assertions of a Platonic love on the one hand and a categorical ban on consummating physical love on the other seems to have been Rush's major concern, and also one of the principal motivations behind drafting his "Observations", as he intimates in a letter to Thomas Jefferson dated 4th February 1797:

> I am now preparing a paper for our [American Philosophical] Society in which I have attempted to prove that the black color (as it is called) of the Negroes is the effect of a disease in the skin of the leprous kind. The inferences from it will be in favor of treating them with humanity and justice and of keeping up the existing prejudices against matrimonial connections with them. (Butterfield 1951:2.786).

As he himself confesses, Rush designed his 'scientific' reading of colour as leprosy as the perfect formula for preserving the status quo, and particularly for keeping anti-'miscegenation' laws in place. Even though arguing that maintaining a strict segregation is necessary in order to prevent "infect[ing] [white] posterity with any portion of their disorder", Rush's text also calls for treating Africans with more 'humanity and justice', as he mentions in his letter to Jefferson.

In an uncanny final twist towards the end of his "Observations", Rush rather surprisingly introduces the idea that if 'black' skin colour constitutes a kind of leprosy, this should encourage masters to renounce their 'tyranny' of these 'patients', who in his view deserve compassion rather than inhumanity. Rush adds that science and humanity" should therefore "combine their efforts, and endeavour to discover a remedy" for this disease (1799:295). Rush's unexpected lapse into a sentimental mode seems to have been convincing to some critics like Winthrop Jordan, who reads the "Observations" as a clumsy attempt by a well-meaning abolitionist to instrumentalise the metaphor of leprosy for a commendable purpose: "Rush *seemed totally unaware of the irony involved* in transforming Negroes into lepers" and failed to realise that "of all diseases leprosy had for ages been treated with something less than 'compassion' and 'humanity'," Jordan writes (1968:519, emphasis added).[30] However, what Jordan lightly excuses as an indeliberate blunder on Rush's behalf emerges as a fully conscious, strategic move in the light of Rush's own letter to Jefferson. Far from embodying the naïve abolitionist Jordan sees in him, Rush consciously carves out a position which enables him to retain the guise of the abolitionist while simultaneously demanding a stricter 'racial' segregation on the pretext of 'ethnic health'.

Such a disturbingly hypocritical self-positioning is not unique for his age. Indeed, the recipient of his letter, Thomas Jefferson, who would ascend to the presidency almost exactly four years later (on

[30] Jordan's view reappears in a slightly modified fashion with Charles D. Martin, who concludes that even though Rush "strengthens the argument against racial intermarriage", he actually intends to make an "argument against slavery and prejudice" (2002:43). Similarly, Dana D. Nelson claims that "Rush is even less invested in what we now think of as 'racism' than [Thomas] Jefferson. Certainly his arguments about 'negro leprosy', based on his observation of Henry Moss *and careful study* [sic], demonstrate his willingness to see the possibility of likeness where Jefferson saw only irremediable […] difference" (1998:57).

4th March 1801), has also been accused of precisely the same kind of moral duplicity. Although powerfully opposing slavery in his younger years, and purportedly "hat[ing] slavery with a passion", as his biographers tell us (Smedley 1993:192), Jefferson – once in office – fully ensconced the position of a conservative Virginia planter. He never publicly condemned slavery nor supported any of the abolitionist movements, and once even advocated extending the slave system into the Western territories (Smedley 1993:192). On a personal level, he continually kept around 200 slaves on his plantation at Monticello and, like many a planter, probably even enslaved children he fathered with African mistresses. During his presidential campaign, Jefferson's rivals accused him of having begotten children by "Dusky Sally" (i.e. a female slave called Sally Hemings), an allegation Jefferson never commented on in his lifetime. However, as the testimony of one of his grandsons suggests, the aristocratic seat at Monticello housed at least one slave boy who bore an uncanny resemblance to Thomas Jefferson (Smedley 1993:198). More recently, these rumours have been substantiated by DNA testing, which has confirmed close kinship between Jefferson and some of Sally Hemings' descendants (Martin 2002:129-30).

If one accepts that the main purpose behind Rush's text is to rationalise a segregationist viewpoint, it becomes suddenly clear why Rush, despite holding the post of secretary to the abolitionist movement, should vilify Africans on the grounds of their physiognomy and their allegedly uncontrollable libido. Such a reading also explains why Rush should perpetuate rumours such as the highly questionable anecdote of "[a] white woman in North Carolina[, who] not only acquired a dark color, but several of the features of a negro, *by marrying and living with a black husband*" (1799:294, emphasis added), a most singular fabrication which markedly sticks out from the scientific theories and the popular lore on skin colour perpetuated at the time. With much sentiment and pathos, Rush laments the 'findings' of his *Observations* in order to cover up his ulterior motives for proposing such a theory in the first place. Instead of openly voicing his personal misgivings against interracial unions, Rush instrumentalises science for rationalising such a view, and thus opts for a strategy which will be brought to perfection by 19th-century anthropologists who 'prove' the inferiority of non-Europeans by means of 'scientific' methods such as craniology, or the measuring of skulls.[31]

A similar strategy one may also perceive in Jean Bodin's reading of colour as leprosy. Simply because Bodin remains silent as to what practical consequences are to be drawn from his theory does not mean that his argument should be read independently of such a setting, quite the contrary. As the following pages shall demonstrate, Bodin quite consciously selects and edits sources from colonial

[31] Another example of science being instrumentalised for 'othering' non-European nations is Charles White's notorious *Account of the Regular Gradation in Man* (1799), which appeared in the same year as Rush's "Observations". Feeling compelled to defend his approach against criticism by abolitionists, White hides behind the 'objectivity' of science when claiming that "the Author had not the Slave Trade at all in view in this Enquiry; his object was simply to investigate a proposition in natural history. He is fully persuaded the Slave Trade is indefensible on any hypothesis, and he would rejoice at its abolition. The negroes are, at least, equal to thousands of Europeans, in capacity and responsibility; and ought, therefore, to be equally entitled to freedom and protection" (1799:137).

contexts which support his argument, and deliberately silences unwanted narratives which threaten the pathologisation of colour he scientifically endorses. How Bodin succeeds in such a task shall be demonstrated on the following pages.

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To many familiar with Jean Bodin's work, the French philosopher will seem an unlikely candidate for pathologising Africans as 'lepers'. After all, Bodin is remembered as the most resolute spokesman against European forms of social oppression of his time, vociferously calling for replacing the system of serfdom prevailing in France at the time with a system of wage labour.[32] Moreover, he is believed to have been exceptional in mistrusting the common stereotypes about Africans prevalent at that time. According to Guy Turbet-Delof, he viewed Africa not as a territory of mystery and fable, but as merely "one continent among others", inhabited by quite ordinary people.[33] In his *Six Bookes of a Commonweale*, Bodin does indeed freely compare European forms of government with the African governmental structures he finds recorded in Leo Africanus, and appears genuinely disinterested in the popular fables of a 'monstrous Africa' which fascinate many of his contemporaries (Turbet-Delof 1974:212). However, as emerges from the main thesis of the *Six Bookes* – i.e. that every nation should be governed by a form consistent with its climate and its national character – it is clear that Bodin does not consider ethnicity irrelevant, quite the contrary. If Bodin appears somewhat less enthusiastic about reiterating common ethnic stereotypes than his contemporaries, this is arguably more due to Bodin's thematic focus (after all, he writes about political structures) rather than because of any ideological leanings. Such a hypothesis appears quite probable, given that Bodin also willingly accepts anecdotal evidence where it serves to buttress his arguments, as in his reading of colour as leprosy.

Both in the *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History* (1566)[34] and in his *Six Livres de la République* (1576), translated into English by Richard Knolles (1606), Bodin reiterates the classical belief that skin colour and human character are primarily determined by climate and by the celestial bodies. In stark contrast to his progressive views on politics and economics, Bodin's outlook on natural science is unmistakably medieval. He trusts ancient authorities more than empirical observation, and dismisses Copernican cosmology for being incompatible with Aristotelian physics, with the Scriptures, and with human intuition (Tooley 1953:67). If there is any originality to Bodin's scientific thought, it does not lie in proposing anything radically new, but in systematising medieval

[32] See the following lines with which Henry Heller begins his discussion of Bodin's views on slavery: "Bodin is recognized as an early advocate of abolition, who believed slavery was an affront to religion, human dignity, and reason […]. Bodin held that a strong state was the trustee of a citizen's rights and possessions. Slavery not only robbed a whole class of humanity of such civic rights, but in so doing represented a permanent threat to the stability of the state" (Heller 1994:54).

[33] "Pour Jean Bodin, l'Afrique – ailleurs terre de mystères, de fables, de miracles – est un continent parmi d'autres; et l'Africain, somme toute, un homme comme vous et moi, soumis, sans doute, à certaines conditions particulières, mais ni plus ni moins cruel, par exemple, qu'un lansquenet" (Turbet-Delof 1974:212).

[34] Notice that Bodin's *Méthode*, in which the crucial passages of his reading of colour as leprosy occur, was, unlike the *Six Livres*, not translated into English. However, it seems reasonable to assume that the text would have been accessible in England in the Latin original (Paris 1566, 1572) or in its French translation (Paris 1572). The following analysis relies on Bodin's text in French, edited by Mesnard (1951).

knowledge, and in giving conventional wisdom a more coherent form (Tooley 1953:83). On the subject of skin colour, too, Bodin remains seemingly unimpressed by the numerous contemporary travel reports which reject the climate theory as an inadequate explanation of skin colour.[35] Instead, he wholeheartedly embraces the medieval view that it is temperature and humidity alone which determine human character. Even though the four humoural types of the phlegmatic, the sanguine, the choleric and the melancholic remain a commonplace in 16th and 17th century anatomy and science, they are rarely associated with a clearly-defined geographical locality. Bodin, however, reverts to the belief expressed by Bartholomew Anglicus and by other medieval thinkers that a particular humour arises out of a bodily response to a particular climate. Thus, a tropical or southern climate (hot and moist) would typically give rise to the melancholic type characterised by cold and dryness (Tooley 1953:72). It is by systematically examining this type of the 'melancholic African' in the light of the climate theory that Bodin sidetracks his sources and eventually arrives at a new reading of 'black' skin colour as leprosy.

The physiological explanation Hippocratic-Galenic theory offers for the presence of a particular humour is that a body contains an excess of one of the four bodily juices, which in the case of melancholy is 'atra bile', or black bile. According to Bodin – and here he veers away from the mainstream of classical and medieval sources – it is not a Phaëton-like 'burning', but an excessive production of black bile fostered by heat which bestows a dark colour upon the skin of Africans and other 'Southerners' (1572:5.315). While Bodin's slight modification of medieval dogma is not revolutionary *per se*, the novelty of his approach lies in the obstinacy with which he pursues the equation of dark skin with black bile. If dark bodies contain a disproportionate amount of black bile, Bodin reasons, they not only possess a melancholic temper, but must also be prone to the diseases particular to this melancholic type. Thus, according to Bodin, Africans suffer from leprosy, which is typically diagnosed as being triggered by high levels of black bile, both by Greco-Roman as well as by medieval physicians (Holman 1999:292, Brody 1974:34). Henry of Mondeville (c1300), for example, defines leprosy as "a hideous disease […] originated from melancholy or matter transformed in melancholy" which is not merely a cutaneous disease, but a condition afflicting the entire physiology, being "to the entire body what a cancer is to the cancerous member" (Touati 2000:186). Such a belief is still present in the early modern period, as may be gleaned from the writings of the Spanish Dominican Hieronymus Lauretus ("[l]epra […] ab atra bile originem habens" (1570:614)), or from the Renaissance translation of Bartholomew Anglicus by Stephen Bateman ("[o]ne manner [of] Lepra commeth of pure Melancholia" (1582:7.65.113r)).

[35] For challenges to the climate theory in the English tradition, see Eden (1555:360v), Best (1578:28), Bateman (1582:15.87.251r), Purchas (1613:6.14.545), or Burton (1621:2.2.3.321n.x). There is no doubt that the same observations were voiced in non-English traditions, too. After all, the earliest of these sources, by Richard Eden, is a translation of a text by Peter Martyr Anglerius (Pedro Mártir De Anghiera) (1447-1526), a Spanish historian of the exploration of the New World.

By suggesting that black skin constitutes a symptom of leprosy, Bodin merely connects previously existing articles of belief in a new matrix, thereby setting a precedent for similar suggestions to be put forward in the 17th and the 18th centuries. Robert Burton in his encyclopedic *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), for instance, remembers that "Bodine in his 5[th] booke de repub[lica] cap. 1 and [in the] 5[th] cap. of his method of history, proves that hote countries are most troubled with melancholy" (1621:1.2.2.5.108), and Burton also mentions leprosy as a frequent disease among melancholic types. An abundance of "Melancholy matter" may, according to Burton, trigger a series of medical conditions, among them "madnesse", "severall Maladies, as scury &.", "leprosie" and "black Iaundise" (1621:1.1.3.4.51). Although he fails to specify what 'black jaundice' exactly stands for, it is highly likely that the term is meant to refer to the melanin which darkens human skin, especially since this is the way in which the term is used later 17th and 18th century sources which pathologise skin colour by forwarding a similar argument.[36]

Bodin, however, does not rest his case on a reinterpretation of scholastic theory alone. Having 'established' the causal links between 'black' skin, black bile, melancholy and leprosy on a theoretical level, he proceeds to prove – by examining several classical and contemporary sources – that leprosy has constantly troubled, and therefore must have originated from, the African continent. To begin with, Bodin claims that Africa must be the cradle of leprosy due to its classical name *morbus Punicus* ('the Punic disease'), and also because Pliny asserts that the disease had not been known to Rome before the Egyptians brought it to the Italian peninsula (Page 1956-63:26.5.7). Secondly, Bodin notes that neither the Greek nor the Roman tradition knows an extensive legislation on leprosy comparable to the one in the Pentateuch, and he argues that this discrepancy should be attributed to the latitude separating the 'southern' Jews from the 'northern' Romans and Greeks. Thirdly, Bodin reiterates the popular myth that syphilis, which he like many of his contemporaries confuses with leprosy, reached Europe from the tropics, i.e. from the Caribbean. Finally and most importantly, he cites two Renaissance writers, Leo Africanus and Francisco Alvarez, both of whom have allegedly confirmed that leprosy is endemic and particularly widespread on the African continent (Mesnard 1951:5.324-25).

What is striking about Bodin's argument is the fact that when making his case for an 'African leprosy', he actually distorts the texts by Alvarez and Leo Africanus in order to make them conform with his theory. Contrary to what Bodin claims, Francisco Alvarez in his travel account of Ethiopia actually commends the Ethiopians for the compassion they show towards leprous patients. Alvarez

[36] Thomas Browne in his *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, for example, wonders whether skin colour "might not proceed from such a cause and the like foundation of Tincture, as doth the black Jaundice" (Robbins 1981:6.10.327), and the same expression recurs in the entry "Nègre" in the *Encyclopédie*, which rhetorically asks: "Finally can we not view in some sense the colour of Africans like a natural black jaundice?" ("Enfin ne pourroit-on pas regarder en quelque façon la couleur des nègres comme un ictere noir naturel[?]" (1751-80:6.78, translation mine)). A similar reading of skin colour as jaundice also can be found in Count de Buffon's *Histoire naturelle* (1749:522-30).

writes: “There are many lepers in this country, and they do not live away from the people; they live all together; there are many people who, out of their devotion, wash them and tend their sores with their hands” (Alvares 1961:2.514).[37] What Alvarez clearly intends to be read as an illustration of the exceptional devotion of Ethiopians to their ill, Bodin converts into a piece of incriminating evidence for the enveloping presence of leprosy in Africa. The absence of any strict segregation between lepers and non-lepers, which Alvarez regards as an outstanding manifestation of Ethiopian self-sacrifice, is condemned by Bodin as a failure to establish any proper social order. If African societies do not separate lepers from non-lepers, Bodin insinuates, this must be due to the fact that African ‘melancholics’ are by nature bound to develop symptoms of leprosy at some point. Even though Bodin fails to develop this point any further, it seems clear that what he tentatively suggests is that since leprosy cannot be safely contained within Africa itself, this necessitates an even stronger boundary without. In other words, enforcing a rigorous separation between ‘northerners’ and ‘southerners’ is indispensable in order to protect Europe from becoming infected with African ‘leprosy’.[38]

Bodin’s handling of Leo Africanus is even more problematic. Bodin is not altogether wrong when quoting Leo as a source documenting the spread of leprosy in Africa. There are in fact at least two passages in which Leo confirms the presence of the disease in Africa, the first one appearing when Leo describes a sizeable leper community in Fez, and the second one referring to a much-frequented “lake of leapers [sic]” in Northern Africa which supposedly “heal[s] the disease of leprosie” (Pory 1600: 3.157, 5.257). These two passages, however, seem to be outweighed by a much more prominent passage in the opening of Leo’s First Book, which Bodin chooses to ignore. That this omission represents a conscious choice emerges from the fact that Bodin not only greatly admires Leo for familiarising Europeans with the African continent (“Il nous a découvert l’Afrique”), but also cites him accurately more than 20 times in his *Six Bookes of a Commonweale* (Turbet-Delof 1974:204-11).[39] The narrative Bodin chooses not to tell is comprised in a passage which deals with the origin of syphilis, a disease which is frequently mistaken for leprosy, also by Bodin himself.[40] The passage runs as follows:

Over the mountaines of Atlas, and throughout all Numidia and Libya they scarcely know this disease. […] Not so much as the name of this maladie was ever knowen unto the Africans, before Ferdinand the king of Castile expelled all Iewes out of Spaine; after the returne of which Iewes into Africa, certaine unhappie and lewd people lay with their wives; and so at length the disease spread from one to another, over the whole region. […] Howbeit, this they were most certainly perswaded of, that the same disease came first from Spaine; wherefore they (for want of a better name) do call it, The Spanish poxe.

[37] Alvares’ passage occurs only in the Portuguese original (Beckingham 1961:2.514) but not in the considerably shortened translation of Alvares’ text in Purchas’ *Pilgrimes* (1625:2.7.1117), where it seems to have been left out for the sake of brevity.

[38] Notice that Bodin also chooses to ignore the following passage from Alvares’ travel account which Pory reprints in the introduction to his edition of Leo Africanus: “Concerning phisicke, and the cure of diseases, they [i.e. the inhabitants of the Ethiopian empire] know verie little or nothing; but for aches in any partes of their bodies the onely remedy which they use is to apply cupping-glasses; and for head-aches they let the great vaine of the temples bloud” (Pory 1600:22).

[39] “Bodin cite, en général, très fidèlement, sinon très exactement, l’Afrique de Léon: s’il s’en écarte parfois, quant à la lettre, il est exceptionnel – disons plutôt: accidentel – qu’il n’en respecte pas l’esprit" (Turbet-Delof 1974:212).

[40] See the following passage from the *Méthode*: “Nos écrivains modernes affirment de leur côté qu’en Amérique *les lépreux* sont nombreux mais que leur *mal* est appelé *napolitain*” (Mesnard 1951:324-25), emphasis added). ‘Neapolitan disease’ is a synonym for syphilis. For further examples in which syphilis is mistakenly labelled *leprosy*, see Williams (1994:802).

Notwithstanding at Tunis and over all Italie it is called the French disease. It is so called likewise in Aegypt and Syria: for there it is used as a common proverbe of cursing; The French poxe take you. (Pory 1600:1.38-39)

Read against the backdrop of predominant Western myths on syphilis, Leo's account of the origin of syphilis could (and to some extent should) have acted as an eye-opener for Bodin in several respects. After all, Leo delivers not only a counter-narrative which not only directly contravenes the Western pathologisation of the African, but he simultaneously sheds some light on how narratives of pathologisation are generally constructed.

Typically, Leo considers syphilis as a foreign pestilence which, formerly unknown south of the Atlas, has made secret inroads into the heart of Africa. Surreptitiously introduced by an enigmatic group of Jewish women exiled from Spain, the disease has perpetuated itself by illicit sexual intercourse. By presenting syphilis as a consequence of a moral fall, Leo's explanation parallels the way in which most Renaissance texts, written or visual, read the disease. The most famous Renaissance treatise on syphilis, Jerome Fracastoro's famous mock-epic "Syphilis, sive Morbus Gallicus" (1530),[41] portrays the syphilitic patient as one justly stricken with the disease.[42] While Leo adheres to this idea of syphilis representing a disease imposed on humans for their moral failure, he diametrically opposes the Western narratives on syphilis with respect to geographical settings. From 1518 onwards, European scholars and literati, Fracastoro included, unanimously share the view that syphilis must have been brought to Europe by one of Columbus' ships following the discovery of the New World. This hypothesis, which is still hotly debated among historians today (Bentley 1989:13), may be founded on historical fact. Measured by its own rhetoric, though, such a Eurocentric claim appears no more persuasive than Leo's theory, for the simple fact that it follows the same rather suspect pattern. The idea that epidemics always arrive from outside, i.e. from a foreign country or even from a distant continent, is a commonplace in narratives of disease. As a sign of 'otherness', disease is customarily disowned as a foreign entity, and tagged with a foreign name. According to Leo, syphilis is either known as 'the Spanish pox' or as 'the French pox', depending on the geographical self-positioning of the speaker. The same labels are of course common in the English tradition, yet they are by no means the only ones. English authors also speak of the *Neapolitan pox*, the *Dutch pox*, or the *Indian pox*, but never of the *English pox*, unless in a jocular vein.[43] The same principle applies to non-European traditions, which likewise 'disown' syphilis and other diseases.[44] As these examples clearly illustrate, the *bonmot* that 'diseases have no native country' has currency both in Western discourse as well as in Leo's *History*. Indeed, Leo even inadvertently draws attention to this fact when pointing out

[41] For a facsimile reprint of Fracastoro's Latin original see Wöhrle (1988). A user-friendly Latin version with a full word-index is offered by Eatough (1984). The classical English translation of the poem is Nahum Tate's (1686).
[42] The same understanding of syphilis as divine punishment pervades William Clowes' *Treatise Touching the Cure of the Disease Called Morbus Gallicus* (1579).
[43] The diverse foreign labels attached to syphilis are recorded in Williams (1994:427, 440-41, 542-45, 711-12, 941-42, 1278-79). For an instance in which syphilis is humorously identified as English, see the following lines from Ben Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599): "What, the *French* poxe? – The *French* poxe! our poxe. S'bloud we have 'hem in as good forme as they, man" (Williams 1994:440).
[44] Upon the outbreak of leprosy in Hawaii in the 1840s, for instance, local inhabitants spoke of *mai Pake* (or 'the Chinese disease') (Edmond 1997:78).

that the term *Spanish pox* had been chosen "for want of a better name", i.e. because there could be no more suitable attribute for the disease than a foreign label. The same point is reinforced by his description of how the Egyptians and Syrians relish to curse by invoking the "French pox" rather than an Egyptian or a Syrian one. This simple yet fundamental insight, which automatically emerges from a juxtaposition of Leo's text with concomitant Western narratives, is obviously suppressed in Bodin's text.

Instead of recognising Leo Africanus and Alvarez as powerful correctives to predominant Western myths of foreign disease, Bodin eclectically singles out those passages confirming his preconceived ideas, and, having taken them out of context, incorporates them in his argument. Failing to see the dynamics underlying such narratives of disease, Bodin reiterates conventional myths on leprosy and syphilis to the effect of marking the African as diseased and as sexually deviant. However, since Bodin fails to situate his theory of African leprosy in any social context, his ulterior motives behind constructing such an argument are somewhat difficult to grasp. On the one hand, it is not inconceivable that Bodin sensed that his theory could fuel the systemic 'othering' of Africans enforced in the newly-established colonies in the West Indies. Then again, Bodin all too clearly prioritises theoretical reflections about climate and human physiology over the analysis of colonial hierarchies, which implies that his statements on skin colour primarily serve the aim of buttressing his climate theory, rather than the purpose of vilifying any particular ethnic group. Lastly, one must not ignore the possibility that Bodin merely spells out and systematises a popular theory which is not of his own making. After all, most ingredients of his theory, such as the associations of Africans with melancholy, or the notion that dark skin must represent some kind of disease, are widespread in the early modern period and beyond. Such notions often appear quite spontaneously in Western discourse, as for example with the Jamaican-based physician Hans Sloane, who attributes an unknown disease in African slaves to their skin colour.[45] Another idea Bodin receives rather than develops is the medieval dogma that the physical segregation of lepers is 'natural', and that accepting lepers on equal terms is the sign of a 'diseased' society. These articles of belief, which render the pathologising of Africans as lepers so powerful, resurge again prominently in 19th century colonial discourse, where the 'failure' of certain Asian and Pacific nations to impose a Western-style segregation on leper patients is viewed as proof of the degeneracy of non-Western societies.[46]

In addition, when close-reading Bodin's pathologising of the African leper, one should bear in mind that the roots of such thinking are much older than his theory, and that they are already located in the labelling of certain ethnic groups as 'melancholics'. Historically speaking, the concept of melancholy has always had a stronger affinity with disease than the three corresponding types of the

[45] "So soon as this Disease again appear'd, I thought, that perhaps, this was proper to Blacks, and so might come from some peculiar indisposition of their black Skin" (1707:cvi). The passage is pointed out in Jordan (1968:519n.13)).
[46] On non-European leprosy in 19th century colonial discourse, see Gussow (1989:85-107), and the literature on the subject pointed out in Touati (2000:182).

sanguine, the choleric and the phlegmatic, to which melancholy was added in the 3rd century AD (Flashar 1966:13). In one of the earliest descriptions of melancholy in the *Corpus Hippocraticum* (5th c. BC), the term stands for an obscure illness whose symptoms are not explained, yet which is supplied with a diagnosis. This disease, whatever its manifestations, is said to arise from a drying up and from a thickening of gall which is blackened in the process, as the term *melan-cholia* (<Gk. 'black gall') suggests. Diligent historians have attempted to explain this Hippocratic concept of melancholy as a symptom of blackwater fever (a kind of malaria). Others have identified it as the vomiting of black blood, a symptom which could occur if – under highly dramatic circumstances – blood is darkened by coming in contact with hydrochloric acid (Flashar 1966:23-24). Although these speculations cannot be categorically dismissed, it is obvious that the bodily 'juice' of melancholy represents a phantom substance which, in contrast to the other three bodily juices (blood, mucus and gall), cannot be empirically verified (Schöner 1964:56-57). Another quality which distinguishes 'black bile' from the three other substances is the notion that such an element does not exist in a benign form. Its physiological function is always a destructive one. According to Galen, 'black bile' freely travels from the spleen to other parts of the body, and – if present in a pure form – destroys any bodily texture it makes contact with. Due to its mobility, melancholy is regarded as the source of both physical disease and of mental suffering, for it is said to bring forth sentiments such as fear, sullenness, delusions, a yearning for death, and madness. As a seemingly boundless receptacle for diseases of all kinds, melancholy remains shrouded in mystery as long as the diseases ascribed to it remain unexplored.

If one scrutinises the writings of classical teaching on melancholy, it appears that Bodin's association of the substance with 'blackness' is not truly novel as such. In a memorable metaphor in *De atra bile*, Galen draws an analogy between the outer darkness of the night which frightens all humans, and an inner darkness which obscures reason, and triggers fear (Flashar 1966:106-07). Whereas Galen conceives of melancholy as an invisible 'darkness within', Bodin turns it into a 'darkness without' which is rediscovered in the African. By insisting on a demography which maps melancholy exclusively in the South, Bodin effectively dispenses with the concept of a 'European melancholy'. Bodin thereby differs from many medieval sources that utilise the melancholic as a metaphor for the marginalised, diseased European (Pastoureau 1995:30).[47] Bodin also differs from the most prolific and subsequent writer on the subject in the early 17th century, Robert Burton, whose life-long interest in the subject was stimulated by his self-diagnosis as a 'melancholic type' (O'Connell 1986:29). Unconcerned with the traditional, medieval mapping of the melancholic and with medical diagnosis, Bodin moulds the medieval typology of humours into a new matrix of physiological difference which lends itself to classifying and categorising different nations according to their outward appearance.

[47] Significantly, medieval illustrations sometimes illustrate the melancholic type as dressed in particoloured dress, as Pastoureau documents (1995:30, also reproduced in the chapter on *Titus Andronicus* (Fig. 60, page 195)).

Even though Bodin's attempt differs markedly from the 'racialising' of later periods, one may perceive a common denominator between Bodin and later writing on 'race'. With Bodin, with Rush and 19th century anthropologists, the European and the African are not just separated by difference, but are conceived of as diametrically-opposed binaries. According to Bodin, Europeans are hot and moist, while Africans are cold and dry, and therefore may only thrive in their respective climate. Many other Renaissance authors take such an opposition for granted, and are flabbergasted when seeing this axiom disproved. George Best, for instance, expresses great surprise at learning that "Africans c[an] manage to survive a winter in England while English men see[m] to be dropping like flies under the burning African sun" (Brown 1999:94). The notion that what is healthy to the Northerner is harmful to the Southerner and vice versa occurs in many variations from antiquity to the modern period. In illustrations to *Mandeville's Travels*, to Hartmann Schedel's *Nuremberg Chronicle* (1493) (Park and Daston 1981:38), or to Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographiae universalis* (1554) (Campbell 1988:46), the inhabitants of the tropics are imagined as Europeans whose heads, limbs and torsos have been twisted in the most extraordinary ways.[48] The concept of opposition is also present in the Renaissance topos of likening the native inhabitants on the Cape of Good Hope to the Antipodes, the Greek mythical nation said to inhabit a mysterious continent in the southern hemisphere (Merians 1998:123). The dichotomy separating Europeans and Africans also prevails of course on an aesthetic level. By inventing the concept of somatic 'whiteness', Renaissance discourse establishes the European and the African body as two opposite poles of chromatic space between which other nations, such as 'Orientals' or the inhabitants of the New World, are mapped. This emerges clearly from the fact that other colour terms such as 'olive-coloured', 'yellow', or 'red', only develop into stable stereotypes once 'blackness' and 'whiteness' have been safely established.[49]

Crucially, this concept of a European-African opposition is also borrowed as a template for exploring the African mind. Based on the assumption that African preferences must always run counter to European taste, Africans are believed to venerate 'blackness', and are thought to regard 'whiteness' as the colour of the Devil.[50] Such a superficial 'acceptance' of African difference, however, must not be be confused with an egalitarian welcoming of non-European cultural norms, or with a toning down of Eurocentrism. Statements such as Peter Martyr's claim that "[t]he Ethiopian considers that black is a more beautiful color than white, while the white man thinks otherwise" are

[48] This unmistakeable Eurocentric perspective is of course not limited to physical descriptions of non-Europeans, but likewise applies to the characterising of unfamiliar religious rites or dress codes. See for example what is probably the earliest European illustration of a religious ceremony in India in the 14th century French manuscript *Le Livre des merveilles*, where a group of European women are shown worshipping a black female idol wearing a white European habit. The only indication that this scene is meant to represent a distortion of proper Christian worship is offered by the skin colour of the female statue adored, and – even more relevant to this thesis – the chequered floor upon which the women dance (Mitter 1977:3-4, Fig.2).

[49] On the coining of these later colour terms, see Brown (1990:90) and Vaughan (1995:3,31).

[50] See e.g. the German and Danish proverb 'In Africa the blackest is the most beautiful' ("Im Mohrenland ist schwarz galant"; "I Morland er de sorte de smukkeste") (Wander 1867-80:2.694 "Mohrenland"). See also Thomas Browne's argument that dark skin cannot represent a curse for Africans because "they esteem deformity by other colours, describing the Devil, and terrible objects, White", an idea he probably borrows from a similar statement in Samuel Purchas (Robbins 1981:6.11.520). Likewise, bishop Joseph Hall self-assuredly claims that in Africa "our whitenesse would passe there for an unpleasing indigestion of forme" (1612:94), without furnishing any further evidence.

not indicative of any "cultural relativism", as Jonathan Schorsch suspects (2004:41). Rather, defining African ideals as the exact opposite of European norms merely upholds the myth of an unbridgeable gulf between between the two continents. Establishing a Manichean dichotomy between European and African bodies and minds, then, is not synonymous with accepting different cultural or aesthetic ideals. On the contrary, Renaissance texts make it quite clear that there is only one way in which the black/white binary may be read, namely as a manifestation of the (white) norm, contrasted by an inversion of this norm. Thus, this supposed 'acceptance' of ethnic difference merely validates the European predilection for 'fairness' and 'whiteness' as a natural given.

One notable example in which this Eurocentric perspective comes prominently to the fore is the entry "Africa" in Thomas Blount's *Glossographia* (1565), one of the earliest dictionaries which supplies its entries with (folk) etymologies:

> It is called *Africa* of the Greek world *Phrice*, which signifies cold, and the particle *A*, which, in that language being placed before a world, deprives it of its proper sense: so that Africa signifies a Country hot, or without cold, as indeed it is. (1565:"Africa")

In this folk etymology, which is also recorded in Isidore of Seville, in Bartholomew Anglicus, and in several other Renaissance texts, Africa is characterised in terms of absence, i.e. as a continent lacking the comfort of a cooler climate.[51] In many contemporary texts, the inhabitants of Africa, too, are described in terms of absence. As melancholic bodies they first and foremost lack warmth, and this is precisely what the Merchant of Venice's daughter Portia tells the lacklustre Prince of Morocco: "Fare you well, your suit[52] is cold", to which he replies: "Then farewell heat, and welcome frost" (*MV* 2.7.73, 75). In other Renaissance texts, the African body is frequently described as lacking European 'health'. Africans are often depicted as physically unstable, and as bodies subject to impure conditions such as the 'flux', which allegedly not only affects women but also men. As the symbol of such 'effeminate' inconstancy, early modern texts often ponder on the symbolic significance of the Nile, a river which by waxing and waning like the moon mimics the volatility inherent in the natives (Hall 1995:27).

Striving to articulate this opposition between 'diseased' natives and 'healthy' Europeans, Bodin opts for the label of an epidemic whose customary reference point is gradually being eroded at the time. Throughout Europe, leprosy reaches a peak in the 13th and 14th centuries, yet virtually disappears in the late 15th century, except in the northerly regions of Scandinavia and Iceland, where it actually spreads. As Michel Foucault points out in the opening to *Madness and Civilization* (1988:3-6), the Renaissance sees the closure of numerous medieval 'leprosaria' all across Europe, many of which are subsequently turned into mental asylums. From the 1470s onwards, leprosy no longer

[51] See Bartholomew Anglicus (Trevisa 1975:15.19.736), Richard Eden (1555:357) and John Pory (1600:1). Notice also that many medieval Renaissance texts allude to this folk etymology when opting for spelling *Aphrica* (Campbell 1988:56; *OED* "African" A1a). On 'true' etymologies of *Africa*, see Appendix 1.

[52] Notice the pun on suit (or dress), which may indirectly allude to the Moroccan's skin.

constitutes a major threat in England, and by the time the last British leper, the Shetland islander John Berns, is admitted to the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary in 1798, leprosy has long been transformed from a harrowing experience into a received text (Richards 1977:104). Thus, once the term *leprosy* is no longer rooted in an actual experience, it is liberally applied to new, unknown conditions, such as syphilis, and also becomes a placeholder for other mysterious conditions gaining prominence in the Renaissance, such as unfamiliar skin colours.

When Bodin dubs dark skin 'leprous', he quite consciously triggers collective memories of a rigorous segregation preached in the Pentateuch and widely practiced throughout the medieval period. Whether such a shared recollection is based on a large-scale ostracising of lepers during the medieval period (as medievalists have traditionally claimed) or on a myth (as François-Olivier Touati has recently postulated (2000:183-84)) is of little relevance to the present discussion. Much more important is fact that, in the Western tradition, leprosy overwhelmingly evokes associations with segregation, mostly due to the authority ascribed to the discussion of leprosy in Leviticus 13-14. The idea that leprosy necessitates social exile – an exaggeration of sorts, as medical historians now agree – is also present in Greco-Roman thought, yet without being supported by "the dominant dialectic of purity and pollution found in Israelite proscription" (Holman 1999:308).

This belief that leprosy requires social segregation is also related to the fact that it is often believed to be incurred by a transgression of social boundaries. The majority of medieval texts subscribes to the view that "lepers threaten society not only through infection but also through their corrupt and evil behaviour", and that they "burn with desire for sexual intercourse" (Brody 1974:52). Leprosy is overwhelmingly believed to be "spread through sexual intercourse, and more particularly, illicit sexual intercourse" (Brody 1974:56), which effectively casts the leper as an agent rather than a hapless victim, and prevents him from being morally restored. Still today, it is the Levitical interpretation of leprosy as a divine punishment for sexual transgression which those afflicted with the disease find most difficult to bear. Incidentally, efforts to destigmatise the condition by replacing the problematic term *leprosy* with the scientific term *Hansen's disease* have largely failed,[53] among other things because narratives of disease often prove more durable than the conditions they are meant to describe. As Susan Sontag (1978, 1988) has aptly pointed out, every disease possesses a particular narrative, be it tuberculosis ('the painless wasting away of the body'), cancer ('the monstrous growth fostered by stressful modern lifestyles'), or AIDS ('the condition of promiscuous homosexuals and drug abusers'). These narratives, and the myth that leprosy represents a venereal disease, develop a dynamic of their own, and exist largely independently of the scientific or medical discourse on these diseases.

[53] Notice that 'leprosy' or *Hansen's disease* (triggered by the *Mycobacterium leprae*) has nothing in common with the obscure skin diseases described in the scriptures. The term *Hansen's disease* commemorates Gerhard Armauer Hansen of Norway, the first person to describe the disease scientifically in 1873-74 (Gussow 1989:6).

Even though Bodin himself does not comment on the modesty or lustfulness of Northerners and Southerners, his concept of the Southern melancholic paves the way for asserting the allegedly libidinous nature of Africans. Nathanael Carpenter, for instance, states in his *Geography Delineated* (1625) that

> this insatiate appetite of Venery in the Southerne people, proceeds not from heat, but from Choler Adust, & Melancholy: which humours carry in them a salt & sharpe quality (according to Physicians) which stirres up their appetite to Venery: which we may plainly observe by experience: for no men are more moved by this itching appetite of carnall Copulation, then Melancholy men. (1625:2.13.228).

As Carpenter notes later on in passing, he is not only familiar with Bodin's work, but also subscribes to Bodin's explanation of skin colour as a symptom arising from an excess of melancholy.[54] There is thus reason to believe that Bodin's work influenced early modern English colonial discourse to a considerable degree, not only by offering a convenient metaphor for pathologising skin colour (and thus facilitating demands for a neat segregation of 'nations' or 'races'), but also by providing an alternative framework for projecting narratives of lechery onto skin colour.

***

Having surveyed the various ways in which myths about leprosy serve as narratives of othering, it is important to take note of the fact that the Renaissance also knew several narratives inspiring solidarity with victims of leprosy. Examples of such narratives include the suffering servant Job, who in medieval times is the patron saint of lepers (Brody 1974:56) (Fig. 29),[55] or Lazarus, the 'chosen leper', whose name becomes a synonym for leprosy in several European languages (*OED* "lazar", n. 1). Furthermore, there is Saint Martin, who donates half of his own cloak to a leper,[56] and even the example of Christ himself, who not only heals a leper (Mt 8:1-4) (Fig. 28), but due to a mistranslation in the Septuagint is even believed to be "leper-like" himself (Isa 53:4) (Vogt 1969:89).[57] These narratives are not only retold time and again in written and oral texts, but they are also frequently picked up in medieval illustrations (Brody 1974:Figs.1-11) as well as in Renaissance paintings, such as Cosimo Rosselli's (1439-1507) *Sermon on the Mount and Healing of the Leper* in the Sixtine Chapel, or Albrecht Dürer's *Healing of the Lame* [sic] *through Petrus and John* (1513) (Vogt 1969:91). There are thus several Renaissance sources which actually acknowledge that the ostracising of the leper in the Old Testament has effectively been superseded by the New Covenant.

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[54] Carpenter explicitly names Bodin in the middle of his discussion of Northerners and Southerners (1625:2.13.229). One page down, he very much emulates Bodin's argument when stating that "[f]or the Blacknesse of the Africans about the Tropickes, we can ascribe [it] to no other certaine cause, then externall heat, and internall cold[,] his [its] necessary concomitant", and states that its origin is "melancholy" (1625:230).

[55] Notice that in the Renaissance Job also becomes the patron saint of syphilis, also known as *mal saint homme Job*, which is frequently confused with leprosy (Brody 1974:56).

[56] See the anonymous stained glass of the Church of Maschwanden, Switzerland (c. 1506), showing Saint Martin donating his cloak to a spotted leper (Jetzer et al. 1994:Fig. 103).

[57] In some medieval apocrypha, this 'leper-like' quality is mythologised in a narrative of how Jesus presents himself to those surrounding him as a leper in order to test their generosity and compassion (Holmberg 1970:30).

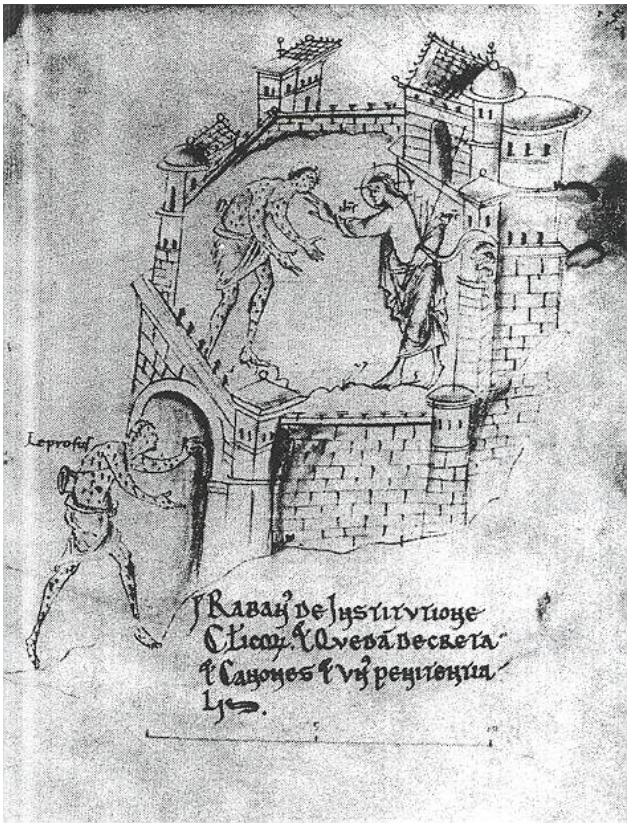

Figure 28. Jesus healing a leper.
Gospel book from the abbey at Essen (9th century)
Dusseldorf Landesbildstelle Rheinland, MS Cod. B. fol. 5 recto (Brody 1974:Fig. 5)

Figure 29. Job's wife urging Job to bless God and die. Woodcut by Hans Wechbelin for Hans von Gerssdorff's *Feldbuch der* 113, *Wundarznei* (Strasbourg 1517)

Unfortunately, it appears that these counter-narratives did not succeed in overcoming the deeply-ingrained superstition that leprosy necessitates social exile, nor could they free the label 'leprosy' from its slanderous reputation. Also, narratives of forgiveness, such as Matthew 8:1-4, seem to have done little to alter the perception that leprosy is a condition which has been self-inflicted through sinful acts in the first place.[58] As Saul Nathaniel Brody repeatedly emphasises in his history of leprosy, the disease is in spite of all these positive subtexts overwhelmingly considered a *Disease of the Soul* (1974). The predominant prejudice against leprosy is also reflected linguistically, in expressions such as *moral leper* (Brody 1974:12), or in the German synonym for leprosy, *Aussatz*, which is nothing but the nominalised form of the verb *aussetzen*, or 'to cast out'.[59] The same condemning stigma is attached to Renaissance syphilitic patients, who are customarily called 'lepers', as repeatedly pointed out above. 'Othered' as members of another nation or ethnicity, syphilitics are conceived of as 'fallen' human beings, and represented accordingly. On the frontispiece to Joseph Grünpeck von Burkhausen's *Hübscher Tractat von dem Ursprung des Bösen Franzos* (*Pleasant Treatise on the Origin of the Evil French [Malady]*) (1496), one of the earliest treatises on syphilis, we find the pious syphilitics being restored by God's grace, while the hardened sinner who does not pray

[58] See the extensive commentary on Mt 8:1-4 by the Anglican exegete John Boys (1638:151-158).
[59] The history of the term *Aussatz* has been extensively researched by Holmberg (1970). Notice also that a large number of Renaissance texts speak of 'leprosies of the soul' and of 'leprosies of sin' in various contexts (Brody 1974:190).

is shown as a 'fallen' man undergoing his just punishment (Fig. 30). The iconographic trope, it should be noted, largely conforms with the woodcut illustration reproduced at the opening of the section accompanying Alciato's "You cannot wash an Ethiope white". There, the 'patient' 'suffering' from dark skin colour is also presided over by a benevolent force performing a rite of absolution which, however, can only succeed with the willing and truly repentant sinner.

Figure 30. Frontispiece to Joseph Grünpeck von Burkhausen's *Ein Hübscher Tractat von dem Ursprung des Bösen Franzos* (Augsburg 1496) (Boehrer 1990:Fig. 1)

This stereotyping of leprosy and syphilis as impure, sinful states, which reverberates throughout early modern colonial discourse, also finds expression in the icongraphic topos by which these diseases are codified. In the illustrations above, as well as in Western art in general, so-called 'lepers' rarely bear symptoms of 'proper' leprosy (or Hansen's disease), or of any other identifiable disease. More often, their bodies merely "reproduc[e] the emblem of leprosy – *a body covered with spots*" (Brody 1974:48, emphasis added). This supposedly 'hybrid' appearance of lepers is also emphasised in written texts, such as Stephen Bateman's translation of Bartholomew Anglicus (1582), according to which one type of leprosy covers the body "by "diverse speckes, now red, now blacke,

now wan, now pales" (1582:114v), while another sort renders the patient similar to "an Adder", being "stript and pilled and full of scales" (1582:113r). As these iconographic and rhetorical conventions underscore, Renaissance sources often do not simply diagnose lepers, but actually *make* or *construct* them. The concept of leprosy serves as a malleable metaphor for segregating certain groups and individuals from society by marking them as spotted beings, or as bodies which are by definition impure, corrupted and contagious.

This concept of the leper as the bestial, as the fallen, and as the morally corrupt also prevails in English medieval and Renaissance literature. In many anglophone texts, lepers distinguish themselves from their surroundings by their distinct lechery. Thus, in the 13th century romance *Amis and Amiloun* (13th c.), in some versions of the Tristan and Isolde legend and in Robert Henryson's *Cresseid* (late 15th c.), leprosy afflicts those engaging in adulterous liaisons, and those arranging such promiscuous encounters (Bond 1992:444, Wynne-Davis 1993). Similarly, in *Hamlet*, the lethal "leperous distilment" (1.5.64) poured into Hamlet's father's ear, which renders him "[m]ost lazar-like" (1.5.72), is an obvious metaphor for hearing of the sexual pleasure fuelling Claudius' and Gertrude's 'incestuous' union.

Analogies between leprosy and Africans also come prominently to the fore in the three plays that will be analysed in the following chapters. Lepers and Africans are often seen as occupying the same status of the outcast. Thus, the Prince of Morocco's self-conscious "Mislike me not for my complexion" (*MV* 2.1.1) closely resembles Queen Margareth's painful outburst: "What, dost thou turn away and hide thy face? / I am no loathsome leper; look on me" (*2H6,* III.ii.73-74). Even though physical and mental disease do not necessarily represent a stigma in Shakespearean drama, references to disease frequently occur in the context of curses levelled at foreigners. As a glance at any Shakespeare concordance will reveal, some terms for disease, such as *pox* or *leprosy*, are almost exclusively used as swearwords, as for instance in *Antony and Cleopatra*, where Scarus curses: "You riband-red nag of Egypt - / Whom leprosy o'ertake!" (3.10.10-11). Shakespeare thus tends to follow the general linguistic trend of using the concept of leprosy in a pejorative sense, and of fashioning images of illness into a popular mode of abuse.[60] This, however, does not exclude the distinct possibility that leprosy, lepers and other diseases are evoked in order to expose the constructedness of a discourse pathologising difference.

To conclude this survey of the allegorical leper in Renaissance discourse, it appears that this figure very much parallels the allegorical leopard, both in terms of usage, as well as with respect to its symbolic properties. Like the allegorical leopard, the early modern leper is a stereotype nurtured via a medieval textual legacy rather than an actual experience. Both leopard and leper possess an ambiguity

[60] See for instance the synonyms *Siech* in Swiss German or *spetälsk* in Swedish, both of which constitute rude terms of abuse (Keil 1980:1.1256).

which is gradually phased out during the Renaissance period. Just like the medieval concept of a good, Christ-like panther is superseded by images of evil felines from the 16th-century onwards, so too the medieval subtexts of idealised lepers give way to the idea of leprosy as a divine punishment of sexual lust. Due to the highly idiosyncratic English pronunciation of *leopard*,[61] the animal possesses an acoustic affinity with the *leper* which facilitates a semiotic transfer between the two symbols. In various anglophone dialects, *leopard* and *leper* are often mutually exchanged in puns or accidental slips of the tongue.[62] Furthermore, in the 17th century, those carrying symptoms of 'leprosy' (i.e. syphilis) on their bodies are customarily likened to human 'leopards'. Accordingly, we find references to "pepper'd whores like leopards", to catamountains "leading a scurfy life", or to prostitutes as "spotted [as] leopards, whom for sport Men hunt, to get the flesh".[63]

Since during the Renaissance syphilis was believed to have originated from the Caribbean, the concept of a 'leopard-like' leprosy also often invokes exotic, non-Western settings. In Thomas Dekker's *Satiromastix* (1601), Captain Tucca addresses his licentious paramour as "my nible Cat-a-mountaine", "[my] carkas", "[my] moldie decay'd Charing-crosse", and "my West Indyes" whom "none but trim Tucca shall discover" (Bowers 1964-70:3.1.165-86). In the anonymous *The Hunting of the Pox* (1619), which retells the Caribbean roots of syphilis, the disease is compared to the constant biting of a 'fierce hound' procreated by a leopard, which in turn had been raised by an evil, 'magpie-coloured' ("pybalde") priest (1619:B3). Analogous to the reading of colour as disease, the 'leopard-like' condition of leprosy also merges with dark skin. One example is James Shirley's *Imposture* (1640), in which Juliana, who has been turned into a prostitute by the cunning 'cat-a-mountain' Flaviano, is said to wear her symptoms of syphilis like "a sunbeam writ / Upon [her] guilty forehead" (Dyce 1833:5.3[lines not numbered]).[64] The ease with which allegorical leopards and lepers displace one another as symbolic representations of 'unwholesome' colour strongly suggest that in Renaissance discourse, symbols of the spotted rarely appear in isolation, but prevail in clusters of related concepts. Arguably, it is precisely this oscillation between the poles of bestiality, pathology and lechery which shapes the symbolism of the spotted into such a powerful tool for misrepresenting ethnic and somatic difference as the mark of a fallen creatures.

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[61] The curious pronunciation (lep'erd) is due to the French influence following the Norman conquest, and reflects that of the Old French cognate *leupart* or *leupard*. The spelling *leopard* appears in Middle English about 1330, apparently borrowed from Late Latin (Barnhart 2000:"leopard"), but exists alongside various other spellings such as *libard*, *leberd*, *lupard*, *labarde* etc. (*MED* "leopard").

[62] For instance the *Scottish National Dictionary* (1934-76) lists *leper* as a Scottish variant of English *leopard*, and quotes as an example the expression *to pay twa leper cats*, a jocular reference to the heraldic leopards on the pound notes of the Aberdeen Banking Company (1771-1849). The Scottish adjective *leap(e)red* ('infected with leprosy') is occasionally also misspelled with an additional *o*. An early modern book on gardening, for instance, advises against turning a ground "leopared with unskilfull dunging", and recommends "lay[ing] bair leopered tree roots" (*Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*: "Leper"). And in some English dialects people also speak of "Leppards as white as snow, as the saying is" (*The English Dialect Dictionary*: "leppard"), a phrase which alludes to the 'snow-like' leprosy in the Pentateuch (Lev 13:10).

[63] See Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) (Waith 1963:4.1.27-29, 4.5.72) and Thomas Dekker's *2Honest Whore* (1605) (Bowers 1964-70:3.1.170, 4.1.311).

[64] Most of these passages are pointed out in Williams (1994:217-18).

This chapter started examining the pathologisation of colour by close-reading the 'fallen' condition of the suffering 'Ethiopian' in Alciato's *Emblematum liber*. Interestingly, the oscillation between stereotypes proposed here may also be observed in an English adaptation of Alciato's work, in Geoffrey Whitney's well-known *Choice of Emblemes* (1568). In a Latin quote borrowed from a contemporary emblem book by Barthélemy Anneau (*Picta Poesis* (1564)), Whitney compares the futile attempt to 'cure' an Ethiopian with turning a mule into a horse (Whitney 1586:57). Bearing in mind the significance of the mule as a placeholder for interethnic 'mulatto' offspring, the multiple link connecting discourses of bestiality, pathology and illicit sexual desire are unmistakable. For Whitney, then, otherness is constructed via multiple images conjuring up various existential threats to the Western self. The leper bears the mark of the leopard-like human governed by lechery, which in turn represents a diseased condition in itself. The uncanny circularity of these stereotypes both shocks and amazes, and also reveals at the devastating effect such language has on its victims. Faced with a 'hydra' switching from one allegation to the next, those othered find it – as Alciato unintentionally puns – literally "impossible" to escape the code of the spotted.

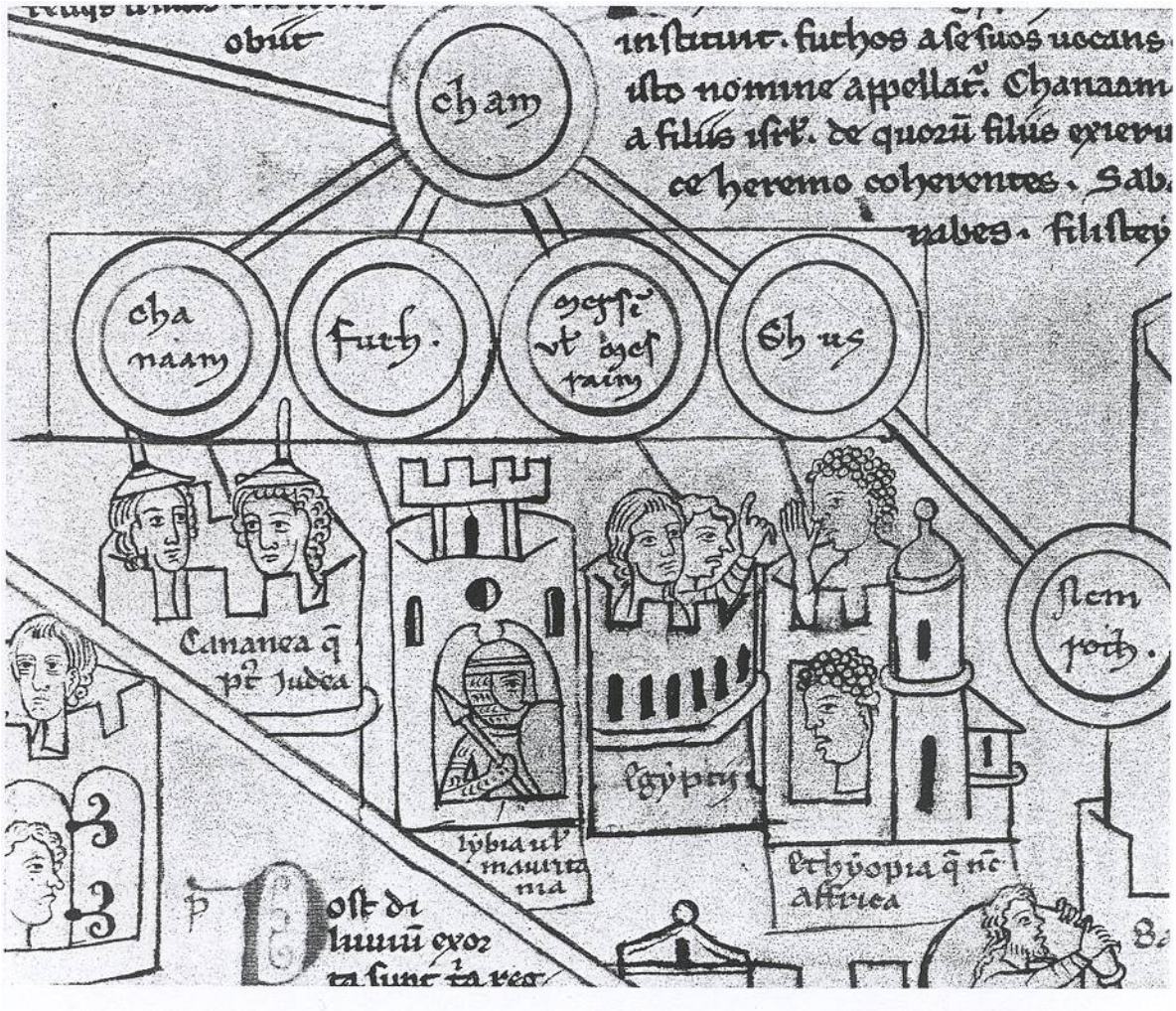

Figure 31. The descendants of Cham [Ham]:
C[h]anaan, Futh [Phut], Mersius or Mizraim, and Chus
Genealogical rotulus from Soest (Germany) (c1230)
Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz (MS lat. Fol. 141)
(Mellinkoff 1993:1.134)

The Lecher

Shylock: "The curse never fell upon our nation." (*MV* 3.1.80)

On the genealogical rotulus of Soest (c1230) (Fig. 31),[1] a curly-haired descendant of Chus is thumbing his nose at the Egyptian sons of Mizraim in an imaginary reenactment of Ham's mockery of Noah's nakedness in Genesis 9:20-27. What renders this medieval illustration particularly intriguing is not just its role as a precursor to reappropriations of Ham's transgression in early modern colonial discourse. Unwittingly, the document also unveils two major inconsistencies characterising the instrumentalisation of Ham's transgression as an African fall. First of all, in order to arrive at the desired meaning, the rotulus is forced to alter biblical text. In the illustration above, the mocking gesture is not (as would be consistent with the biblical narrative) performed by Noah's son Ham, but by Ham's son Chus, the ancestor of African nations in the Western tradition (Braude 1997:108).[2] Secondly, the exclusively male pedigree in the rotulus visualises a problematic lacuna deeply ingrained in the Pentateuch and in Western discourse in general, namely the systemic exclusion of the female (Bugner 1979:2.143). This conventional silencing proves particularly problematic in texts which accept the myth of Ham's curse as a 'scientific' explanation of the origin of colour. After all, the concept of an Aristotelian male reproduction is constantly proved wrong in children of interethnic unions in whom female 'blackness' overpowers male 'whiteness'. Thus, the myth of Ham automatically creates the need for an alternative theory which presents colour as a phenomenon emanating from the female body. Renaissance thinkers and anatomists find this alternative myth of colour in classical and biblical myths of a creation through 'visual impression' and through the imagination. These alternative myths are shaped into a narrative of a female Fall which parallels and complements the doctrine of colour as the Fall of Ham.

In order to shape the myth of Ham into a useful critical tool for further analysis, it is necessary to historicise its dissemination and its degree of general acceptance at a particular point in time. Despite numerous publications on Ham's curse in recent years, such a critical assessment has so far been lacking for the Renaissance period.[3] Indeed, in the most recent and most comprehensive study on the subject, Stephen R. Haynes concludes that "by the early colonial period a racialized version of Noah's curse had arrived in America", yet Haynes remains deliberately ambivalent on "when to date the fateful conjuction of slavery and race in Western readings of Noah's prophecy" (2002:7-8). There has indeed been considerable uncertainty as to when the myth of Noah's curse was first exploited as an instrument of 'othering' ethnic and social groups. Several critical studies have subscribed to the

[1] For a reprint and discussion of the whole rotulus, see Bugner (1979:2.Fig.108).
[2] See also Capgrave's *Chronicle of England* (before 1461): "Cham had IIII childirn: Chus, of him cam the Ethiopes; […]" (Hingeston 1858:18).
[3] See the extensive critical discussions of Ham's myth in medieval thought (Hill 1986, Friedman 1992, Freedman 1999:86-104), in early modern thought (Allen 1963:155-73, Gliozzi 1977, Jordan 1968:17-20, Saunders 1982:38-40, Quilligan 1996, Braude 1997, Schmidt-Biggemann 1998: 657-701), and in the modern period (Haynes 2002).

"myth about the myth" (Freedman 1991:87), founded by Winthrop Jordan (1968:18), according to which medieval sources borrowed the identification of Ham with African slaves from the Jewish tradition.[4] Immediately after its publication, the hypothesis triggered a series of vicious personal attacks against Jordan, based on the assumption that Jordan's doubtful theory of such an intercultural transfer had been ideologically motivated (Braude 1997:129-30, Freedman 1991:88). Even though this origin myth has in the meantime been disproved, the mystery of the origin as such has not been conclusively solved, which perhaps explains why the figure of Ham has elicited comparatively little response in Renaissance studies in general. The prevailing attitude is perhaps best emplified in the recent *Norton Shakespeare*, in which Noah's curse is briefly mentioned in passing, yet without the necessary bibliographical hints for following up the theme in further detail (Greenblatt 1997:22). Also, apart from one recent exception (Andreas 2002), which links the myth to *Othello*, it has not been read in connection with any Shakespearean play.[5] Surprisingly, even postcolonial critics have shown little interest in Noah's curse, arguably because the conflicting space between patriarchal thought, scientific theory, and colonial realities which converge in the myth itself have been only insufficiently theorised. This chapter, therefore, will attempt to close these gaps, and pave the way for a critical reassessment of what may be the most influential narrative of the non-European 'lecher' in the Western tradition.

The single source upon which the myth of Noah's curse on Ham rests is the following passage from Genesis 9, which appears virtually identical in the *Vulgate* and in the major 16th and 17th century English Bible translations.[6] The *Authorised Version* narrates it as follows:

> And Noah began to bee an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard. And he dranke of the wine, and was drunken, and hee was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakednesse of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japhet tooke a garment, and layed it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakenesse of their father, and their faces were backward, and they saw not their fathers nakednesse. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his yonger sonne had done unto him. And he said, Cursed bee Canaan: a servant of servants shall hee be unto his brethren. And hee saide, Blessed bee the LORD God of Shem, and Canaan shalbe his servant. God shall enlarge Japhet, and he shal dwel in the tents of Shem, and Canaan shalbe his servant. (Gen 9:20-27)

At first, the narrative appears fairly straightforward. Noah, intoxicated with his own wine, unwittingly displays his private parts, and falls asleep. Lying prostrate on the ground, he is accidentally espied by Ham, his wicked son, who gazes upon his nakedness. This gaze is later on reinterpreted by various biblical exegetes as laughter, as an act of castration, as a magic spell which renders Noah impotent, or as a carnal 'seeing' involving an act of sodomy.[7] According to Genesis, Ham adds to Noah's humiliation by sharing his experience with his two brothers Sem and Japhet, "thinking to corrupt them

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[4] One historian uncritically taking over Jordan's hypothesis is Joseph R. Washington Jr. (1984:10-14, 21). For a recent, comprehensive discussion of Jordan's hypothesis, see Jonathan Schorsch's *Jews and Blacks* (2004:135, 138-40).

[5] Contrast this silencing of the myth in Renaissance studies to the successful close-reading of Genesis 9 in John B. Friedman's analysis of Chaucer's *Miller's Tale* (1992).

[6] Compare the following quote to the versions in the *Geneva Bible*, in the *Bishop's Bible* and in the *Douai-Rheims Bible*.

[7] With most medieval exegetes, Ham's sin is laughter (Freedman 1999:88). The motif of sodomy appears in the Babylonian Talmud (Freedman 1999:87). Castration occurs in Rabbinic commentaries (Jeffrey 1992:327, Freedman 1999:87, Haynes 2002:24), in Annius of Viterbo (Schmidt-Biggemann 1998:675), and with some 17th-century Dutch theologians (Allen 1963:78). Based on Annius of Viterbo, Samuel Purchas in *Purchas his Pilgrimage* (1614) speaks of Ham as someone "teaching and practising those vices, which before had procured the deluge, as Sodomie, Incest, Buggerie" and "abuse of himselfe" (Braude 1997:132).

also", as the Protestant clergyman Andrew Willet puts it in his *Hexapla in Genesin* (1608) (Haynes 2002:34). However, Sem and Japhet thwart Ham's expectations by not following his example. Instead, they attempt to restore Noah's paternal authority by covering his nakedness with a piece of cloth while walking backwards with averted faces, thus carefully avoiding repeating their brother's unsolicited gaze. Noah awakes, intuitively knows what has happened, and blesses Sem and Japhet and their 'tents', or families,[8] while cursing the wicked son's kin.

Strangely, though, the one actually cursed with servitude is not Ham himself but his son Canaan, who according to all textual variants of Genesis 9 has not participated in the deed at all. This inconsistency greatly puzzles exegetes,[9] and coaxes them into offering rather creative ways to resolve this internal contradiction. According to a Midrashic commentary, Noah cursed Canaan (who was purportedly Ham's fourth son) because Ham had previously castrated Noah to prevent him from begetting a fourth son himself (Freedman 1999:87). In John Chrysostom's view, Canaan was cursed because he had been born on the ark, following Ham's breach of the prohibition against copulation on the vessel. And the late 17th century Dutchman Van der Hardt proposed that Noah had vented his rage on Canaan because he was the fruit of Ham's incestuous love to Noah's wife, a love which had been consummated during Noah's sleep (Allen 1963:77-78). In contrast to these idiosyncratic readings, though, most Western exegetes simply understand the punishing of Canaan as a sign that Noah's curse was inflicted on a whole series of generations rather than upon one individual. John Calvin, for instance, argues that Noah "was not contented with one man[']s punishment, but would have his cursse so tyed to posterities [*that*] *it might passe from age to age*" (Tymme 1578:232, emphasis added). The same interpretation is also picked up by the Elizabethan explorer George Best (1578), who claims that Noah cursed Ham's offspring because Ham had, through illicit intercourse on the ark, attempted to produce an heir to all the dominions of the world (Neill 1989:214n.76).

A similar interpretation has been favoured by various voices intending to malign a particular social or ethnic group as being subject to a divinely-ordained, hereditary state of servitude. Up until the modern period, diverse disempowered groups have been deliberately vilified as 'Hamites' or 'Canaanites', who allegedly deserve their underprivileged status on account of 'their' postdiluvian fall. Unsurprisingly, the crude pedigrees on which these readings hinge are beset with inconsistencies, a characteristic which also applies to the genealogical rotulus above. In those texts in which Noah's curse is superimposed onto the *African* body, yet another problem arises, namely how the origin of skin colour, which is not mentioned in Genesis 9 at all, may be convincingly inserted into the narrative

[8] The Hebrew term for *tent* literally means 'household', 'family', 'domain'. Bearing unmistakable pastoral associations, it is also often associated with the Tabernacle or 'house' or the Lord in the scriptures. Literary references to biblical tents are fairly widespread, and occur in a variety of works from Chaucer to Emily Dickonson and Melville (Scheneidau 1992:759-60).

[9] The puzzlement by exegetes is best expressed by John Calvin, who states that "it is mervell, that Noah curssing his sonnes sonne, overpasseth Cham his sonne, who was the authour of the wickednesse" (Tymme 1578:232).

and reconciled with the biblical text. In spite of the fact that the biological phenomenon of colour clashes with the concept of a purely patrilinear descent, readings of Noah's curse as an 'African fall' are forwarded at fairly regular intervals from the early modern period until the 19th century and beyond (Haynes 2002:181-221). As 'white' male myths in crisis, these appropriations of Genesis 9 represent unique test cases for the texture of an ethnocentric 'logic' which, despite *and because* of its crudeness, powerfully contributes to the systemic malediction of 'lecherous' Africans.

One misconception which has remained widespread in critical readings of Noah's curse is the tacit assumption that the various Western variants of the myth constitute a unified discourse designed to discriminate against just one particular ethnic group at a time. Benjamin Braude, for instance, believes that the dissemination of Renaissance Bible translations led to a shift "from polyphony to modern monophony in the understanding of the Bible" (1997:107), which in turn resulted in a unified interpretation of Ham as an African. This theory of Braude's has also been taken up in a recent study by Jonathan Schorsch, who boldly utilises references to the myth of Ham as an unequivocal indicator of colour prejudice, and even attempts to chart the spread of such prejudice by accumulating the abodes of authors propelling the myth on a world map.[10] However, what renders such a literal mapping of the spread of Noah's curse rather questionable is the fact that during the Renaissance the myth's polyphony persists. The myth of Ham is not monolithic, but exists in different versions, all of which project Ham's progeny onto different ethnic groups. Furthermore, the instrumentalisation of Genesis 9 does not arise from exegesis, as Braude presupposes, but from a popular myth which in turn *influences* exegesis. When Ham turns African in the Renaissance, this does not result from a different reading of Genesis, but mirrors the fact that at this time social and political pressure is mounting against that particular ethnic group.

Also, this deliberate identification of Ham with African 'Hamites' is by no means fixed. As the archetypal lecher, just like other symbols of bestiality, lust and disease, Ham has no native country. Ever the malleable figure, Ham possesses a phantom identity shaped by those discarding him as a negation of the 'self'. As a result, instead of one monolithic Ham, there are at least five parallel figures of Ham coexisting side by side in Renaissance discourse: Ham the African, Ham the Native American, Ham the Asian (or Muslim), Ham the Gypsy and Ham the Jew. These multiple images all supersede the conventional medieval image of Ham the European serf, especially in a colonial environment in which serfdom becomes primarily associated with the non-European. As will be shown below, the Renaissance period does not witness an "Africanization of Ham", as Benjamin Braude believes

[10] See Schorsch's appraisal of Braude (2004:345n.9, 403n.2), and his map which illustrates the presence of Ham's curse over a geographical space ranging from Yemen to Peru, from the Cape of Good Hope to Brazil, and from the Middle East to Northern Europe (136-38). What is particularly striking is not only the absence of any North American location (where the myth was arguably most influential). Even more disconcertingly, Schorsch fails to take into consideration a number of crucial parameters which define the impact of the myth, such as the identification of Ham with different ethnicities (which is far from unified), the critical resistance such rhetoric meets, and further particularities of the cultural context in question.

(1997:120), but knows a multiple instrumentalising of the biblical figure, which only gradually melts down to the 'African Ham' that survives until the modern period. In order to highlight the randomness with which Ham is superimposed onto various ethnic, social and religious groups, it is necessary to survey the different settings in which Noah's unfaithful son has been mapped, an approach which no extant study has hitherto embraced.

The first encounter with an African Ham may be with Josephus, a Hellenised Jew (1st cent. AD), who allocates Ham, Sem and Japhet to Africa, Asia and Europe, respectively. This tripartite structure is subsequently popularised by authorities such as Jerome, Isidore, Alcuin (8th c.), Aelfric (11th c.), Peter Comestor (12th c.) and Bartholomew Anglicus (12th c.) (Braude 1997:111-13). The idea of a tripartite world bestowed to Noah's offspring is frequently visualised on maps such as the 15th century woodcut illustration to Isidore's *Etymologies* reprinted here (Fig. 32), in which the names of Noah's sons have been added to a plain sketch of a 'mappa mundi' or 'T-O map'.

Figure 32. Isidorian T-O-map from a reprint of
Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX* (Augsburg 1472)
(Woodward 1987:302.Fig. 18.11)

Ham's supposed African identity is also codified in a folk etymology which derives his name, usually spelled *Cham* in medieval Latin, from *calidus*. This popular theory, which is put forward by Jerome and by Isidore,[11] is further elaborated by the 9th century exegete Angelomus, who also constructs an analogy between Africa's hot climate and Ham's irascible, melancholic temper (Friedman 1981:101). Since sources such as Isidore's *Etymologies* were widely read and frequently reprinted in the Renaissance, it is clear that the association of Ham with Africa predated the colonial experience.

[11] As Jerome claims in his *Liber de nomibus hebraicis*, "Cham means calidus or hot", and reflects the fact that Cham received the hottest of continents (Friedman 1981:101). See also Isodore's *Etymologies* (Lindsay 1911:7.6.17):"Cham calidus, et ipse ex praesagio futuri cognominatus. Posteritas enim eius eam terrae partem possedit, quae vicino sole calentior est. Unde et Aegyptus usque hodie Aegyptiorum lingua Kam dicitur".

However, this does not mean that there is an unbroken tradition of an 'African Ham' stretching from Patristic writing to the English Renaissance, as G. K. Hunter tentatively suggests (1967:190). Rather, it seems to have represented one narrative strand constantly competing and overlapping with other identifications of Noah's son.

One of these alternative readings is the myth of an Asian or 'Oriental' Ham, which evolves during the High Middle Ages. According to John de Plano Carpini's account of Tartary (13th c.), Cham is actually no-one else but the ancestor of the Mongol ruler Ghengis Khan (Friedman 1981:103), who is in Carpini's report consistently referred to as "Chingis Cham", and the same spelling is still preserved in the English translation of his narrative in Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* (1599:21-70). Likewise, Stephen Bateman identifies this Mongol 'Cham' with Noah's son in an editorial commentary to his translation of Bartholomew Anglicus' *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (1582:15.37.221r), and also Edward Grimeston's translation of Pierre d'Avity's *The estates, empires, and principallities of the world* speaks of "the Empire of the Great *Cham* of Tartaria" (1615:700). The same Asian Ham is propagated by the anonymous and highly influential *Mandeville's Travels* (14th c.), and also Martin Luther claims that after having been cursed by Noah, Ham travelled to Babylon where he founded the city, established himself as "lord of all Asia", and laid the foundation for Nimrod's tower of Babel (Braude 1997, 131, Haynes 2002:33). Why Ham should turn Asian in these sources is quite understandable if one bears in mind the geopolitical situation of Europe at the time. Since from the 13th to the 17th century the principal military threats to Europe (the Arabs, the Mongols and the Turks) were mostly located in the East, the concept of an oriental Ham would obviously appear both convincing and popular at the time. The same applies to the appropriation of the myth by medieval Iberian authors, who rediscover Ham in the Muslim invaders of Spain.[12] As a symbol of cultural otherness and of religious dissent, then, the figure of Ham does not simply stand for the North/South divide, as with early Christian authors, but also for the cultural and religious divide separating Orient and Occident.

Moreover, there is also an epistemological explanation for the rise of the stereotypical 'oriental' Ham in medieval culture. In medieval writing, Cham is frequently mixed up with Cain (sometimes spelled *Chain*), who, banished to the East of Eden (Gen 4:16), is unanimously placed in the Orient. The confusion largely arises from medieval orthography, in which the three minims of *m* could be easily mistaken for an *i* followed by an *n*. As a result, *Cham* and *Chain* would appear virtually identical in manuscript form (Friedman 1981:100). This orthographic ambiguity also explains why several *Beowulf*-manuscripts disagree on whether the monster Grendel should be "of Cain's cyn ['kin']" or "of Cham's cyn", and why the 14th century Benedictine chronicler Ranulf Higden rather confusedly speaks of "Cain, who is commonly called Cham" (Friedman 1981:104-07, 100). This

[12] See Jonathan Schorsch's (2004:33) reference to the 'Hamitic' Muslims in the *General estoria* of Alfonso X.

orthographic overlap also fosters a semiotic *rapprochement* between the two archetypal sinners. What the scriptures describe as Cain's 'Fall' ("Kain was exceeding wroth, and his countenance fel downe" (Gen 4:5, *Geneva Bible*)) is often seen as paving the way for the Fall of Ham. Accordingly, Cain and Cham are often said to be closely related, either genealogically, as on a Flemish pedigree of Old Testament patriarchs (Friedman 1981:100), or they are seen as possessing kindred spirits. Walter Ralegh, for example, is convinced that "[t]he sonnes of Cham did possesse the vices of the sonnes of Cain" (1614:1.6.2), and some biblical exegetes voice similar statements at the time.[13]

This confusion of *Ham* and *Cain* also blends into exploitations of the myth in colonial discourse. Azurara, the Portuguese chronicler of Henry the Navigator, and one of the first Europeans to impose the myth upon African slaves, writes of a "curse which, after the Deluge, Noah laid upon his son Cain [sic]" (Hunter 1985:190). Since Cain was punished for his fratricide by receiving an unspecified mark, which should make him known to all (Gen 4:15-16), there is also a textual legacy which fashions Cain into the ancestor of Africans. Instances of an African Cain occur in the *Vienna Genesis* (11th c.) (Freedman 1999:91) and in some French and Portuguese 18th and 19th century texts (Freedman 1999:333-34n.27, Cohen 1980:11). Even though in 19th century racist discourse, a presumed descent from the sinful race of Cain forms a widespread, powerful pretext for 'denigrating' Africans, such a direct attribution of Africanness to Cain is not put forward in any of the major discussions on skin colour in the Renaissance. If Cain is of any significance in early modern colonial discourse, it is more in his function as a precursor of Ham sharing with his 'brother' the roles of the fallen man, of the archetypal sinner, of the outcast, and of the progenitor of monstrous races inhabiting the edges of the world.

A third medieval tradition which most clearly illustrates the rhetorical strategies underlying the myth of Noah's curse places Ham on European soil. In that tradition, Sem, Japhet and Ham are equated with the tripartite social structure of *oratores* (clergy), *bellatores* (knighthood) and *laborantes* (labourers).[14] In the words of Honorarius of Autun (c.1125), "[i]n Noah's time the human race was divided into three: into free men, soldiers and servants. The free are of Shem, the soldiers of Japheth and the servants of Ham" (Haynes 2002:30). Whereas there is some uncertainty as to whether the 'Semites' should stand for the clergy and the 'Japhetites' for knighthood or vice versa, those occupying the unenvied status of unfree labourers are always singled out as the sons of Ham (Hill 1986:86). In order to arrive at this identification of Ham with the unfree serf, several texts challenge Jerome's claim of Ham's African identity. The anonymous *Boke of St. Albans*, for example, associates

[13] See for instance the following passage from the dedicatory epistle to Thomas Taylor's *Commentarie upon the Epistle of St. Paul*: "Cain drew his brother into the feild [sic] and slue him. Afterwards, when one would have thought that all the thornes had bin destroied by the flood brought upon the world to this purpose, yet was there a Cham left, of whome quickely sprowted that cursed race of the Cananites, who were ever pricks in the sides, and thornes in the eyes of Gods people" (Taylor 1612:[ii], not paginated).

[14] For a discussion of the legendary *oratores*, *bellatores*, *laborantes* formula, see the literature pointed out by Thomas D. Hill (1986:86n.15).

Shem with Africa, Japhet with Asia and Ham with the northern part of the world in order to prove Ham the ancestor of unfree serfs (1486:229). This deliberate move by the author(s) of the *Boke of St. Albans* once again underscores that the early modern identification of Ham with Africa *did not cause* the othering of African nations, but that it *was constructed* in order to legitimise an othering already taking place on the level of human interaction.

How effectively Genesis 9 could be exploited as a rationale for coercion and servitude was already realised by the 4th century Church fathers. As Augustine states in the *City of God*:

> It is with justice, we believe, that the condition of slavery is the result of sin. And this is why we do not find the word *slave* in any part of Scripture until righteous Noah branded the sin of his son with this name. It is a name, therefore, introduced by sin and not by nature. (19:15, quoted in Haynes 2002:225 n.14).

The same vindication of slavery as the punishment of postdiluvian sin occurs in Ambrose, who asserts that "slaves came from sin, just as Cham the son of Noah, who first merited the name of *slave*" (Friedman 1981:101). Roughly one millennium later, Geoffrey Chaucer puts the same article of belief into the mouth of the Parson accompanying the group of pilgrims to Canterbury. As the Parson explains in his tale, "[t]his name of thraldom [i.e. servitude] was nevere erst kowth [known] til that Noe seyde that his sone Canaan [sic] sholde be thrall to his bretheren for his synne" (Benson 1987:X.765). This medieval convention of discovering 'Hamites' among common labourers has remained alive in popular speech in some parts of Europe where serfdom persevered long after the Middle Ages. In Lithuanian and a number of northern Slavic languages "Ham [has] continued to denote the serf, and by extention the peasant, boor, lowly person", while in modern Polish, it "remains a common term of opprobium, denoting a boorish, loutish character" (Freedman 1999:97).

A large number of medieval sources testify to the ways in which this concept of Ham the serf used to be disseminated in society. A 15th century German manuscript containing a presumably much older text features the riddle: "Quo ordine vel pro qua re servi facti sunt?" ("Of which order or for what purpose were servants made?"), to which the correct answer is: "De Cham, qui de verecundia patris sui risit" ("Of Ham, who derided his father's shame") (Hill 1986:82, translation mine).[15] That servitude emanates from Ham is also promoted in various literary works, such as in the *Cursor Mundi* (early 14th c.),[16] or in the catchy Middle English couplet: "O [S]em freman, o Japhet knight / Thrall of [C]ham the maldediht" (Haynes 2002:30). Ham the serf frequently appears in the context of social rebellion, as with John Gower, whose *Vox clamantis* vilifies those partaking in the peasant revolt (1381) as the accursed progeny of Noah's wicked son (Freedman 1991:93). Such rhetoric is however also strongly opposed, as for instance by Jonas of Orléans (9th c.), by Atto of Vercelli (10th c.) or in the *Sachsenspiegel* (13th c.). Also John Wyclif in *De servitute civili* (1378) dismisses the myth as unsubstantiated, and points out that even in the scriptures themselves several of Japhet's sons were

[15] Notice that the term *servi* could denote either 'serf' or 'slave' in Middle Latin (Freedom 1999:99).
[16] "Knyht, and thral and fre man / of these three britheren bigan; / Of Sem fre mon, of Iapheth knight, / thral of Cam, waryed wihte" (*Southern Version of Cursor Mundi*, in Freedman 1999:99).

unquestionably servants, whereas many Hamites were obviously free (Freedman 1991:102-03). Already in medieval times, then, Ham becomes a highly contentious symbol of social oppression on a biblical pretext, and this is also the way in which Noah's son is remembered on the eve of the 'Age of discovery'. Six years prior to Columbus' journey to the Caribbean, and less than two decades before African slavery is institutionalised in Spanish colonies, Raoul de Presles comments on Augustine's *The City of God* (1486) by saying that "[t]hus it can be seen how the line of Ham was evil, for from it descended servants" (Friedman 1981:101). In a perfidiously circular argument, Presles regards the presence of servitude as evidence for the descent from an evil ancestor, which in turn legitimises a servile status. Thus, an imagined descent from Ham becomes a powerful pretext for an utterly arbitrary subjugation which is initially directed at the European serf, and eventually extended to encompass other cultures and ethnicities, too.

In the early modern period, this well-established topos of Ham the serf is transferred onto the new ethnic groups which are systematically marginalised, abused and exploited, such as 'Gypsies' (or Roma), Jews, South American Indios and Native Americans, Orientals, and increasingly also Africans. José de Acosta's *De procuranda Indorum salute* (1588) and other 16th century Spanish sources justify the attempted enslavement of Indios by fashioning them into the descendants of Canaan, the cursed grandson of Noah (Gliozzi 1977:117). In an uncanny adaptation of the familiar proverb, Acosta claims that just as the Ethiopian cannot change his skin or the leopard its spots (Jer 13:23), so too these Indios cannot shed their sinful nature (Gliozzi 1977:116). This latter remark by Acosta is of particular interest, for it shows how symbols of bestiality, pathology and lechery in general are readily displaceable topoi which are readily projected onto new social, religious or ethnic groups should the need arise. Thus, even though the leopard is principally a symbol of 'Africanness' rather than of non-Western 'degeneracy' (see the chapter on "The Leopard"), the successful formulae of the unchangeable leopard and the unalterable Ethiopian appear in various guises. Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon* (trans. 1387) and Robert Fabyan *New Chronicles of England and France* (trans. 1516) rediscover the unchangeable Ethiopian in tyrannous rulers and ungrateful noblemen (Lumby 1865:6.379, Ellis 1811:217), and religious treatises project it upon 'unbelievers', dissenters and adherents to a different religious denomination.[17] In 1640, a seventeenth-century Portuguese inquisitor adapts the biblical proverb to Judaism (Schorsch 2004:182)), and Queen Mary I's *Act against certain Persons calling themselves Egyptians [i.e. 'Gypsies']* (1554) applies the formula of the unchangeable brute to the itinerant Roma (Washington 1984:32-33). In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the unchangeable Ethiopian also becomes the 'unteachable' Native American despising European culture and the Christian faith.[18] And finally, the leopard is also projected onto inhabitants of the East, as in

[17] See Thomas Becon's *News out of Heaven* (1543) (Ayre 1543:48-49), John Bale's *Examinations of Anne Askewe* (1546) (Christmas 1849:1.177), George Gifford's *Briefe discourse* (1582:83), William Worship' *The Christians' mourning garment* (1612:35), or Francis White's *A Replie to Jesuit Fisher's Answere* (1624:22.573).

[18] See e.g. Samuel Purchas' marginal commentary to William Stratchey's *True Reportory* (1625:9.6.§4.1755), or Benjamin Franklin's popular almanach *Poor Richard Improved* for the year 1749 (Labaree and Whitfield 1959:3.339-40).

Anthony Munday's pageant *Chrysanaleia: The Golden Fishing* (1616), in which a distinctly oriental "King of Moores, gallantly mounted on a golden Leopard" enters the stage while "hurling gold and silver every way about him" (Bergeron 1985:90-91).[19] Clearly, the same malleability which characterises the leopard and the 'unchangeable Ethiopian' also typifies the figure of Ham, which during the Renaissance is located in a variety of different settings simultaneously.

Probably the most influential reading of Ham as a Native American, which also considerably influenced the English understanding of the myth, occurs in William Stratchey's *The Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania* (1612) (Gliozzi 1977:141-44). Stratchey, who was a shareholder in the acting company known as "The Children of the Queen's Revels", had close contacts to several playwrights including Ben Jonson and William Shakespeare. Stratchey is of course best known for his vivid eye-witness account of a shipwreck in the West Indies in 1609, the so-called *True Reportory*, which was widely circulated in manuscript form, and by general consensus has been accepted as a primary source of *The Tempest* (Wright and Freund 1953:xix-xxii). In *The Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania* (1612), he ponders on the origin of the inhabitants of the New World, and, starting from the assumption that they must take "the same discent and begynning from the universall Deluge" (Wright and Freund 1953:53), wonders to which of Noah's sons the Native Americans should be allocated. The most likely candidate, for Stratchey, is Ham:

> Cham, and his famely, were the only far Travellors, and Straglers into divers and unknowne countries, searching, exploring and sitting downe in the same: as also yt is said of his famely, that what country soever the Children of Cham happened to possesse, there beganne both the Ignorance of true godliness, and a kynd of bondage and slavery to be taxed one upon another, and that no inhabited Countryes cast forth greater multytudes, to raunge and stray into divers remote Regions, then that part of Arabia in which Cham himselfe (constrayned to fly with wife and Children by reason of the mocking that he had done to his father) tooke into possession[.] (Wright and Freund 1953:54)

According to Stratchey, the punishment of Ham and his family is not servitude, but exile. In order to escape persecution, Ham roams "divers remote Regions" in an "unsatisfyed wandring", which is also of a spiritual kind. Severed from his roots, Ham develops an "[i]gnoraunce of the true worship of god", which leads him to "the Inventions of Hethenisme, and adoration of falce godes, and the Devill". With his children neither "instructed, nor seasoned first, in their true Customes, and religion", Ham effectively triggers "the first universall Confusion and diversity, which ensued afterwardes throughout the wold world, especially in divine and sacred matters".[20] The barbarous, brutish and beast-like "vagabond Race of Cham" sharply constrasts with Sem and Japhet who, "content with their owne lymitts and confynes, [do] not trave[l] beyond them" (Wright and Freund 1953:54-55).

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[19] We still possess a somewhat faded original painting of the triumphal arrival of the King of Moors, which was reconstructed and appended to a 19th century reprint of Munday's pageant (Barbour 2003:Fig.13, 211n.49). If this reconstruction is to be accepted as a faithful rendering of the original painting, it would appear that the 'Moors' in this particular case are meant to signify some vaguely defined prosperous oriental nation rather than Africans.

[20] Notice that the same kind of aimless wandering or spiritual erring is also attributed to Ham's spiritual brother Cain by Walter Ralegh: "But it seemeth to me, that Cain was rather a vagabond or wanderer in his cogiatations, then anything else, and that his thoughts and conscience had no quiet or rest, in regard of the murther committed" (1614:1.5.2).

As Stratchey himself points out (1612:53), the identification of Ham with an itinerant group is actually borrowed from Annius of Viterbo (1432-1502), who was an influential figure for the rise of Neoplatonism. Viterbo primarily associates Ham with the Egyptians, a group which during the Renaissance were believed to be related to the 'Gypsies' or Roma (Schmidt-Biggemann 1998:675-677). Viterbo is also quoted by Samuel Purchas, who claims that Ham practised several sexual perversions such as "Sodomie, Incest, Buggerie […] in which the Aegyptians followed him, and reckoned him among their Gods, by the name of […] *Saturne*" (Braude 1997:132). Viterbo, Stratchey and Purchas quite conscioiusly 'other' those nations whose nomadic meanderings render them suspicious in European eyes. A third 'nomadic' group which shares this unenviable status with Native Americans and the Roma are of course the Jews. Significantly, some Renaissance texts do not only liken the diaspora of the Jews to the meanderings of Gypsies,[21] but even advance the concept of a Judaic Ham, or a Hamitic 'Jewry'.

The notion of 'Hamitic Jews' may from a modern point of view appear rather nonsensical, given the painful historical past associated with the categorising of Jews as 'Semites' in the West. However, up until the Renaissance this identification of Jews with Sem had not yet been canonised, but was challenged by alternative theories, such as a tenuous tradition of a 'Jewish Ham' in 15th century German iconography. In Western art in general, Ham does not seem to have been 'racialised' in any particular way until the modern period. Ham is often distinguished from Sem and Japhet in terms of his dress, being depicted wearing a turban-like hat, a spotted dress, or a dress of a distinctly darker colour than those of his brothers.[22] However, from the *Vienna Genesis* (5th c.) to Michelangelo's frescos in the Sixtine Chapel, Ham does not markedly differ from his (Europeanised) brethren either in terms of physiognomy or skin colour.[23] Benjamin Braude, who has sifted through numerous reference works on biblical iconography, somewhat disappointedly concludes that there is "no black Ham in [W]estern art until the nineteenth or twentieth century" (1997:121). Even though Braude's observation is certainly valid in a general sense, Braude seems to have overlooked some instances in which Ham is in fact 'racialised', not as an African (as Braude expects) but as a Jew. In

[21] See for instance Ludovico Ariosto's *Il Negromante* (*The Necromancer*) (1529), in which the fraudulent Jewish protagonist is described in the following terms: "Like [a] gyps[y], [h]e go[es] from place to place, and wherever he passes he leaves his imprint like a snail, […]; and in each place, in order to disguise himself, he changes his name, / his dress, and his country. / Now he calls himself Peter, now John; now he pretends to come from Greece, now from Africa. In reality, he's a Jew, and he was among those who were expelled form Castile" (Schorsch 2004:182-83).

[22] See the illustrations in a Dutch Old Testament of 1439 (Ehrenstein 1923:IV.42), in the House of Mary of Vronensteyn (1460) (Friedman 1992:Fig.9), and in the Cologne Bible (1479) (Allen 1963:Fig.23).

[23] See the *Vienna Genesis* (Gerstinger 1931:IX.48), the mosaics at the cathedral of Monreale (12th c.) and Venice's San Marco (late 13th c.) (Ehrenstein 1923:IV.24, 33), the bronze door of San Zeno in Verona (12th c.) (Vitzhum and Volbach 1924:72), the Romanesque wallpainting at St Savin-sur-Gartempe (12th c.) (Ehrenstein 1923:IV.30), the glass window at Paris' Gothic Sainte Chapelle (13th c.) (Ehrenstein 1923:IV.37), the relief at Venice's doge palace by Giovanni or Bartolommeo Buon (14th – 15th c.), and the 12th and 13th c. English manuscript illustrations reprinted in Ehrenstein (1923:IV.32, 36). See also the great Italian Renaissance versions on the theme, Jacopo della Quercia's (1374-1438) relief at the main entrance to Bologna's San Petronio, Lorenzo Ghiberti's (1381-1455) 'Paradise-door' at Florence (Ehrenstein 1923:IV.50), Bernardino Luini's (1475-1531) painting at Milano's Pinacoteca di Brera and Michelangelo's (1475-64) fresco in the Sixtine Chapel (Ehrenstein 1923:IV.46, 57, 53). A cursory reading of the best-known representations of Ham's mockery and Noah's curse is provided by Don Cameron Allen (1963:155-73).

two illustrations by Peter Drach (1478) (Fig. 34) and by Hartmann Schedel (1493) (Fig. 33), Ham possesses the crooked nose, the bleary eyes and the thick lips reminiscent of anti-Jewish caricature, and the same kind of Judaic Ham reappears again on the margin of the Ptolemian worldmap reprinted in the *Nuremberg Chronicle* (1493) (Fig. 35). Commenting on the last of these three sources, Stephen R. Haynes claims that he cannot discover any 'racially distinct physiognomy' of Ham in the *Nuremberg Chronicle* (2002:34). However, the pseudo-'Jewish' traits in these illustrations clearly come to the fore if one compares the Judaic Ham to the Jewish Judas in for example Martin Schongauer's *Last Supper* (c.1480-90), which was completed at the same time in the same cultural environment (Fig. 36).

Figure 33. From Hartmann Schedel's *Liber Chronicarum*(1493) (Schramm 1922:XVII.422)

Figure 34. From Peter Drach's *Spiegel Menschlicher Behaltnis* (1478) (Schramm 1922: XVII.422)

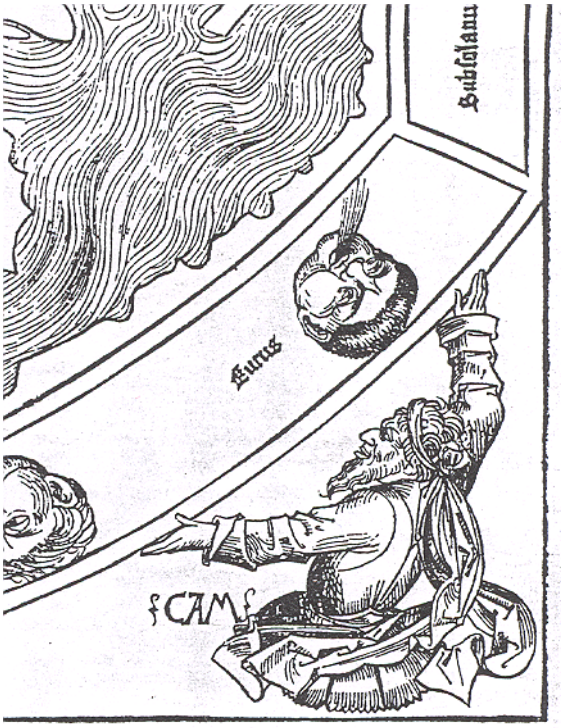

Figure 35. From Hartmann Schedel's Ptoleian Worldmap in the *Nuremberg Spiegel Menschlicher Behaltnis* (1478) *Chronicle* (1493) (Shirley 1983:20)

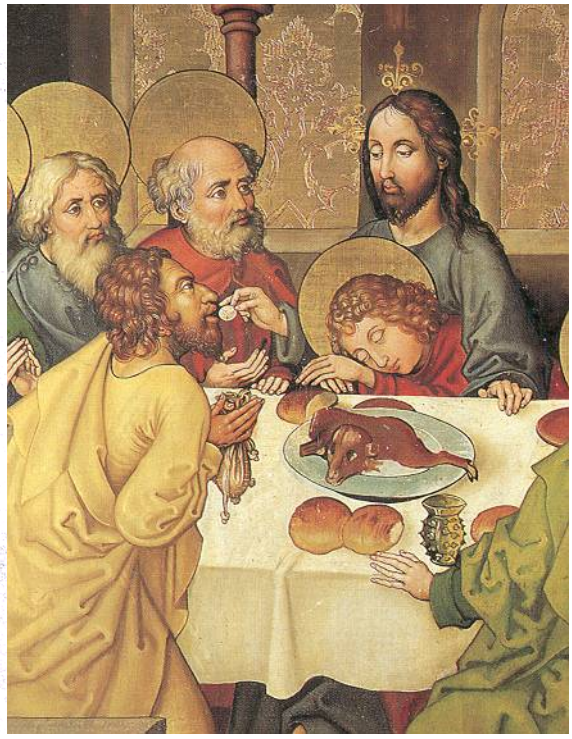

Figure 36. From Martin Schongauer's Last Supper (Panel at the alterpiece for the Church of the Dominicans of Colmar (c.1480-90) (Mellinkoff 1993:VI.53)

The association of Ham with Jews iconographically expressed in these German sources is also sometimes verbalised in patristic and medieval texts. According to Augustine and Jerome, Ham represents the Jews who gazed at semi-naked Christ on the cross (Braude 1997:133), and the same suggestion is repeated again in the *Glossa Ordinaria* (12th century), by the 14th century poet Hugo von Trimberg, and by a 15th century Carthusian exegete called Johann von Hagen (*idem*). In anglophone discourse, though, this association of Ham with Jews does not seem to appear, but we do find Ham and the Jews linked via a concept of 'African Judaism' in a number of Renaissance sources.

The concept of an 'African Judaism' is recorded in several travelling reports of early modern travellers visiting the Ethiopian (later on labelled the 'Abyssinian') empire from the late 15th to the 17th centuries. Ever since the (European) Middle Ages, Ethiopia had been home to the so-called 'Falasha' or 'Beta Israel', a group of ethnic Ethiopians observing Jewish rites.[24] Fascinatingly, tales of these Jewish communities are already echoed in John Pory's Leo Africanus (Andreas 2002:173-74) and in Samuel Purchas' translation of Francisco Alvares (1625:2.7.1050; 2.7.1110). In his section "Of the Jewes", Leo Africanus writes:

[24] In the wake of Ethiopia's serious famine starting in 1984, the state of Israel actually accepted many 'Beta Israel' (literally 'The House of Israel') as proper Jews, and repatriated them in the so-called "Operation Moses".

[A]t this day also the Abassins affirme, that upon Nilus towards the west, there inhabiteth a most populous nation of the Iewish stock, under a mightie K[ing]. And some of our moderne Cosmographers set downe a province in those quarters, which they call The land of the Hebrewes, placed as it were under the equinoctiall, in certaine unknowne mountaines, betweene the confines of Abassia, and Congo. And likewise on the north part of the kingdome of Goiame, […], there are certaine mountaines, peopled with Iewes, who there maintaine themselves free, and absolute, through the inaccessible situations of the same. (1600:379)

Somewhat exaggerating their actual numbers, Leo imagines the Beta Israel to inhabit an autonomous Jewish enclave in the Heart of Africa ("under the equinoctiall") which, cut off by inaccessible mountain tops, flourishes in a Wordsworthian "Abyssinian privacy" (*Prelude* 6.662). While Leo's assessment of the "land of the Hebrewes" appears to lack any recognisable anti-Jewish sentiment, a second spurious Jewish community called the "Cafri or Cafrates" (Pory 1600:379), who in actual fact do not seem to have considered themselves Jewish at all,[25] receive an incomparably more hostile reception with Francisco Alvares:

[T]here are certaine governments of people, called Cafates, a Nation very blacke, and of great stature; and it is reported that they were descended of the race of Iewes, but they have neither Bookes nor Synagogue. They are very subtile men, and of greater wits then other people in these parts. They are Gentiles, and great Warriers, and alwaies are in warre with the Prete [Prester John]. […]. I was never there my selfe; but that which I say, I heard reported by our Portugals, which were there, […]; and they told mee, that these Cafates made great assaults upon them, and chiefly by night, when they came to stay and rob them: on the day-time they retired to the Mountaines and Woods[.] (Purchas 1625:2.7.1110)

Ignorant of their scriptures and lacking proper synagogues, the Cafates are regarded as spiritually and physically corrupted.[26] The degeneracy of these "subtile men" is also believed to be mirrored in their "very blacke" complexion, which renders them perfectly suitable for launching vicious noctural raids against their Christian neighbours. As an enigmatic counterpoint to the empire of Prester John, which early modern travellers believe to have found in the Christian Ethiopian kingdom, the Cafates represent a nation of archetypal Jewish villains rediscovered on African soil.[27]

In the light of this textual legacy, the conventional clustering of Jews and Africans as outcasts in early modern discourse suddenly appears in a very different light. Africans and Jews do not only occupy a similar status as aliens fraught with images of cultural and somatic otherness.[28] What is more, they are also directly linked to each other through the concept of an 'African Judaism', which allows for an oscillating between the two ethnicities. Instances where such an oscillation flares up include Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedie of Mariam, Faire Queene of Jewry* (1613), which problematises both Judaism and Africanness (Callaghan 1994:174-76), or Othello's famous self-reference as a "base Judean" in the *First Folio* text (5.2.356).[29] However, if there is one Shakespearean

[25] According to the editors of Alvares' account in the Hakluyt Society series, today's Gāfāt "are not Jews, but they spoke a Semitic language of the Ethiopic group, now virtually extinct" (Beckingham and Huntingford 1961:1.458).
[26] A similar verdict is reached by Leo Africanus: "The Cafri or Cafates, who […] draw their originall from the Iewes, […] have little and little swarved from the law of Moses: and so are become, as it were, insensibly, Idolators" (Pory 1600:380).
[27] Notice that the juxtaposition of Ethiopia's Beta Israel versus the Ethiopian Christians is not as clearcut as suggested above. The Ethiopian Church, which until the 20th century was closely intertwined with the Coptic Church, preserves several rites which might have appeared typically Judaic to the Ethiopian-bound traveller, such as circumcision, the veneration of the holy Ark, and the Ethiopian national myth, which traces its first ruler Menelik I to a spurious union between Salomon and the Queen of Sheba. Knowledge of these customs and beliefs would have been available via a series of Portuguese travel accounts, which were translated and incorporated in parts in Purchas (Purchas 1625:2.7.1050).
[28] See e.g. Ben Jonson's description of Volpone as a lecher who has begotten bastards on "beggars, / Gypsies, and Jews and black-moors" (Abrams 1993:1.5.4).
[29] The Indian/Judean-crux is discussed in further detail in the chapter on *Othello* (see page 213).

play which exploits this analogy between Jews and Africans in detail, it is unquestionably *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-97).

In the character of Shylock, we meet an embodiment of Jewish 'otherness' bearing several 'African' character traits. Whereas his daughter Jessica is praised for her beauty, Shylock is said to possess a "complexion" clashing with Jessica's like "jet and ivory" (*MV* 3.1.26, 34). While Jessica readily disposes of her Judaic culture in order to embrace European values, like the stereotypical Saracen princess in medieval romance, Shylock stubbornly adheres to his Judaic faith, and consistently violates Venetian norms of proper decorum. He therein also differs from his servant Tubal, whose compliance and familiarity with Venetian taste are already reflected in his name. Tubal, one of Japhet's sons (Gen 10:2), is the central figurehead in a widespread 15th century Spanish national myth intended to legitimise Iberian hegemony over the New World . According to this myth, which is also alluded to in English sources such as Walter Ralegh's *History of the World* (1614), Tubal was the ancestor of both Spaniards and of American Indians, and passed on the right over all his dominion to his firstborn, who settled in Spain.[30] The mythical Tubal thus possesses an intercultural status which he shares with his Shakespearean namesake. Shylock, by way of contrast, is firmly rooted in Judaic culture, and repeatedly presents himself as a Jewish Ham or Canaan. He not only stubbornly insists on receiving a pound of Antonio's flesh, a request which is reminiscent of Ham's obsession with Noah's naked body. He also assumes the role of the defiant, cursed Canaan when claiming that "[t]he curse never fell upon our nation till now, / I never felt it till now" (*MV* 3.1.72-73), and he accepts Cush (or Chus, the ancestor of Africans in the Western tradition) as one of "his countrymen".[31] As Janet Adelman has rightly pointed out in a recent article, cursed Shylock "is in effect made into a Moor" to visualise his cultural and religious difference "through the visible sign of skin colour" (2003:15). Situated at the crossroads between cultural and somatic otherness, Shylock not only bears testimony to an oscillation between various shapes of 'otherness' which seems to have been frequent at the time (Rosen 1997:75, Adelman 2003:16n.27). Rather, typecast as an 'African Jew', Shylock also paves the way for far more disturbing blends of African and Judaic otherness in the following centuries which similarly exploit the genealogy of Noah's sons.[32]

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[30] The myth is first put forward in Gonzalo Fernandez de Oniedo's *Historia general y natural de las Indias* (1535) (Gliozzi 1997:16, Allen 1963:114), and represents an extension of the older "Gothic Myth" by Isidore of Seville, according to which the conquered Iberians derived from Tubal and the conquering Visigoths from Tubal's brother Magog (Poliakov 1971:11). The identification of Tubal with Spain is confirmed in Ralegh's *History of the World*, both in text and in Ralegh's world map (1614:1.8.3.132; 1.8.12.178-79). Janet Adelman lists as a further source Edward Daunce's *Briefe Discourse of the Spanish State* (1590) in which, not surprisingly, Tubal is lambasted as an ancestor who bestowed only "confusion and ignominie" upon the 'deformed' and 'perverted' Spanish nation (2003:28n.31).

[31] See Jessica's lines: "I have heard him swear / *To Tubal and to Cush, his countrymen*, / That he would rather have Antonio's flesh / Than twenty times the value of the sum / That he did owe him" (3.2.283-87, emphasis added).

[32] Perhaps the most notorious of these texts is Johann Andreas Eisenmenger's *Entdecktes Judenthum* (1700), "the bible of antisemitism until the eve of the Nazi rise to power", in which the mocking of Noah is attributed to the "wealthy, mighty, and monstrous Oriental Sem", who is paradoxically also said to represent the biblical ancestor of the African nations (Braude 1997:140).

Even though Renaissance culture features multiple identifications of Ham, Noah's curse is most frequently projected onto the African body. As mentioned earlier, Ham is already identified as an African in some medieval texts, by which time, however, this geographical mapping clashes with the concept of servitude. According to John Wyclif, Ham's descendants *cannot* be (European) serfs *precisely because they are Africans* (Freedman 2000:246), a point which is also raised by the German poet Eike von Repgow (13th c.) (Braude 1997:133). However, as soon as those subjected to servitude have become predominantly Africans, this epistemic discord is miraculously resolved, and all elements of the myth seem to fall into place. Probably the first instance in which Noah's curse is mentioned as a justification of the enslavement of Africans occurs with Gomes Eannes de Azurara, a protégé and chronicler of Prince Henry the Navigator, who describes how around 1450 a group of West African captives has been made subservient to their Muslim masters on the pretext of Noah's curse (Braude 1997:127-28). Roughly one and a half centuries later, George Sandys, an Elizabethan traveller to Egypt, makes the same observation when describing a Turkish caravan as follows: "The merchants brought with them many Negroes; *not the worst of their merchandizes*. […] These are descended of Chus, the sonne of cursed Cham; as are all of that complexion" (1615:136, emphasis added). As Sandy's somewhat disconcerting tone suggests, neither the market value of such human 'ware' nor the pretext for enslaving these people is truly foreign or problematic to him. This suspicion seems confirmed by the facts that George Sandys not only held shares in the Virginia Company and the Bermudas Company, but was also the brother of Edwin Sandys, who played a central role in English colonial ventures.[33] A tacit acceptance of the myth of Noah's curse is also expressed by John Weemese, who in his *Portraiture of the Image of God in Man* (1627) states that "we see to this day, that the Moores, *Chams posteritie*, are sold like slaves yet" (Vaugan 1995:164, emphasis added), again without questioning the righteousness of such behaviour.

There are also some English texts which loudly invoke the myth of Ham's transgression as a vindication for slavery. In *The Blessing of Japhet*, Thomas Cooper elaborates in 62 quarto pages how, as a result of Ham's transgression, "Canaan [shall] still bee a servant to Iaphet" (1615:62). That the blessing of Japhet is in actual fact nothing but a thinly-disguised parable for blessing English colonial enterprises emerges from the dedicatory epistle, in which Cooper praises King James for "sanctifying" colonial lands unto his "deare Countreymen". Even more disturbingly, Cooper greatly rejoices at the fact that "the rude & savage nations farre & near, in Ireland and Virginia, have had this blessed light convayed and enlarged unto them" (1615:[not numbered]). The 'blessing' of Japhet and the 'cursing' of the 'Canaanites' are thus assumed to constitute two complementary divine acts sanctifying the colonialisation and oppression of non-Europeans.[34]

[33] See Schorsch (2004:150, 410n.88), and the biography of Edwin Sandys by Rabb (1998).
[34] In this context, it is interesting to note that in most Indoeuropean languages, the words for 'to curse' are "the exact pendant, in form as well as sense, of those for 'bless', namely the ecclesiastical Latin *maledicere* with its descendants, originally 'speak ill of' vs. *benedicere*, originally 'speak well of'" (Buck 1988:1480).

Parallel to these readings of Genesis 9 as a vindication of slavery, Renaissance texts also cite Noah's curse to account for the phenomenon of skin colour. As A.C. Saunders points out in his *Social History of Slaves and Freedmen in Portugal 1441-1555*, 15th century Portuguese texts often cite Noah's curse "as an explanation of why blacks [a]re black, rather than of why blacks [a]re slaves" (Saunders 1982:39). Other non-English voices debating the viability of Ham's curse as a theory of colour include Jean Bodin (Mesnard 1951:5.315), the Benedictine monk Gilbert Genebrardus (*Chronographiae libri quatuor,* Paris 1580)), and Torniellus (*Annales sacri et profani,* Cologne 1622) (Allen 1963:119). For the English tradition, which eventually defines slavery via the colour divide, identifying Canaan as the first slave or as the first dark-skinned human ultimately amounts to the same thing. Thus, when English authors such as George Best (1578:31), Samuel Purchas (1613:6.14.545) or Thomas Browne (Robbins 1981:6.11.518-20) discuss the relevance of Noah's curse for the phenomenon of skin colour, the context of colonial slavery is always in the offing. A similar unspoken subtext underlies Richard Jobson's appropriation of the myth. Jobson cites Genesis 9 as an explanation for why the males of a certain West African tribe are purportedly "furnisht with such members as are after a sort burthensome unto them" (1623:52). He thereby constructs an analogy between Ham's voyeurism and an African 'lechery' which implicitly calls for a systemic containment of such a libido through segregation and 'corrective' measures. Even though Jobson is perhaps the most perceptive Elizabethan travel writer on Africa, this tentative suggestion of his aligns him with Benjamin Rush, who two centuries later presents himself as a staunch advocate of the African cause, though without living up to his own ideals (see "The Leper", pages 80-81).

Even though Noah's curse is regularly exploited as a vindication of slavery, as a theory of colour, and as 'evidence' for a disproportionate sexual drive, Renaissance audiences do not unanimously subscribe to such a rhetoric. Jean Bodin, for instance, considers it a rather poor explanation for the phenomenon of skin colour, as he points out in his *Methode*,[35] and Walter Ralegh, too, deliberately omits it in his painstaking reconstruction of biblical genealogy in his *History* (1614). Other contemporaries feel rather ambivalent about it, and vacillate between mistrusting and believing such rhetoric. Samuel Purchas refers to it only in a brief footnote to *Purchas His Pilgrimage* (1613),[36] yet by the time he publishes *Hakluytus Posthumus* (1625), he has evidently accepted it as fact (Braude 1997:136-38). Peter Heylyn, too, wavers from one edition of his *Microcosmus* (1621) to the next, first omitting it altogether, then calling it a foolish tale in the second edition (1627), and finally (in the third edition of 1666) conceding that "*possibly enough* the Curse of God on Cham and on his posterity (though for some cause unknown to us) hath an influence on it [the origin of colour]" (Jordan 1968:19-20, emphasis added). In the same vein, the two first editions of Thomas Herbert's *Travels into Divers Parts of Asia and Afrique* (1634, 1638) leave out any reference to the myth, whereas the

[35] "Et j'ai peine à croire l'opinion que nous transmet certain docteur, que ces hommes soient devenues noirs par la malédiction de Cham" (Mesnard 1951:5.315).
[36] "*Some tell a tale* of Chams knowing his wife in the Arke, whereupon by divine curse his sonne Chus was black with all his Posteritie" (Purchas 1613:6.14.545n., emphasis added).

last two editions (1665, 1677) present the inhabitants of the Cape region as "propagated from Cham, both in their Visages and Natures" (Merian 1998:129). Even though many of these examples seem to indicate a growing acceptance of the myth towards the mid-17th century, such a tendency is by no means certain. After all, the vacillatng judgements by 16th and 17th-century commentators may also be taken as evidence for the fact that Noah's curse represents a myth in crisis, and thus needs to be defended in order to remain an effective rhetorical weapon.

This fragile status of early modern instrumentalisations of the myth of Ham is directly related to the fact that all of these adaptations falsify the original biblical text in order to arrive at their desired meaning. Based on the way Genesis 9 is being distorted, one may distinguish between three different textual variants. A first group of authors, including Thomas Cooper (1615:57) and Richard Jobson (1623:35), correctly read the curse as having been levelled at Canaan, and proceed to establish a genealogical link between Canaan and other ethnicities. Naturally, the fact that the Canaanites settled in Palestine, and not in the geographical areas colonised by European powers during the early modern period, is well known among exegetes and laymen during the Renaissance, which renders this version particularly vulnerable to critical opposition.[37] It is not surprising, then, that several 18th century African authors, such as Ottobah Cugoano, make considerable efforts at presenting a coherent and sound biblical genealogy in order to dispel the myth (Carretta 1999:30-35). Well aware of the difficulties in 'Africanising' the Canaanites, a second group of texts attempts to circumnavigate this obvious clash by claiming that Noah's curse did not strike Canaan, but Canaan's brother Chus (or Cush), the ancestor of Africans in Western thought.[38] Among those settling for a cursed Chus are George Best, George Sandys, Samuel Purchas, and – last but not least – the genealogical rotulus from Soest reprinted at the outset of this chapter.[39] The fact that these texts so lightly displace the curse onto Chus once more underscores the observation made earlier that such a reading of Genesis 9 cannot derive from exegesis, but must stem from an obsession to vilify a particular ethnic group on a biblical pretext.

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[37] According to the scriptures, the Canaanites were the inhabitants of the Holy Land prior to the arrival of the Israelites. The various biblical narratives of the conquest of the land of Canaan repeatedly stress that the Canaanites, who are related to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, only deserve "extermination, subjugation or expulsion" (Blackburn 1997a:67). Western writers therefore often establish a link between Ham's transgression and this Israelite conquest, as for instance Bartholomew Anglicus: "Chanaanea is a country in Siria, that was after the floud in the possession of the children of Chanaan, that was the sonne of Cham. And of them were tenne Nations, as Isidore sayth […]. And 8 Nations of them were of the children of Chanaan, in which the curse that was given to them by Cham […], as it were by heritage: and therefore by bidding of our Lord, ye children of Israel put them out, and occupied their lands, as Isidore saith […]" (Bateman 1582:15.37.221r).

[38] "[A]ll the Negros or blacke Moores take their descent from Chus, the sonne of Cham, who was the sonne of Noë" (Pory 1600:1.6). See also John Calvin's assertion that "this Chus was the Prince of the Aethiopians" in his *Commentarie upon the first booke of Moses called Genesis* (Tymme 1578:240). Further Renaissance sources confirming the status of Chus as the ancestor of African nations are listed in Adelman (2003:27n.28).

[39] See George Best ("And of this blacke & cursed Chus came al these blacke Moores which are in Africa" (1578:31)), George Sandys ("These are descended of *Chus*, the sonne of cursed *Cham*; as are all of that complexion" (1615:136)), Samuel Purchas ("Some tell a tale of Chams knowing his wife in the Arke, whereupon by divine curse his sonne Chus was blacke, with all his posteritie" (1613:6.14.545)).

Realising the obstacles arising from the 'othering' of the Caananites or of Chus' offspring, a third series of texts opts for remaining deliberately vague about how the curse was levelled at African nations. In several Renaissance texts, it is Ham and all of his sons who have been allegedly cursed. John Pory, for instance, speaks of "*Cham* the cursed sun of Noah" (1600:20, emphasis added), and an early 17th century sermon states that it was "[t]he accursed seed of *Cham* […] [,] [who] had for a stamp [of] their father's sinne, the colour of hell set upon their faces" (Wilkinson 1607:42)).[40] However, simply failing to specify how the curse was actually transmitted does not make the argument any more convincing, as the mid-17th century scholar Thomas Browne points out:

> [I]f we derive the curse from Cham, […] , *we shall Benegroe*[41] a greater part of the earth then ever was so conceived; and not only paint the Aethiopians, and reputed sonnes of Chush, but the people also of Aegypts, Arabia, Assyria, and Chaldea; for by his race were these Countries also peopled. (Robbins 1981:6.11.518. emphasis added)

As Browne's observation makes quite clear, to "[b]enegroe" all of Ham's sons will not do, at least not for the more sophisticated echelons of society familiar with the actual biblical text. Thus, given the fact that none of these three variants succeeds in disguising the glaring inaccuracies of the myth, there is no question that all of these "radical and radically clumsy misreading[s] of the biblical text" (Hill 1986:86) would have met with substantial criticism from a Renaissance public, which, we should bear in mind, was the first to gain unlimited access to the scriptures through numerous Bible translations.

That Renaissance readers kept a certain critical distance towards the myth of Ham is also supported by the fact that several biblical narratives were critically received at the time. As Don Cameron Allen has accurately remarked, various biblical episodes involving Noah regularly left early modern readers wondering about practical details, such as the question of what shape and size the ark must have been in order to stow away such an abundance of wildlife (Allen 1963:78-79). Other debates centred on the problem of reconciling the mysterious New World with a biblical text endorsing an Old World perspective. William Stratchey in his *Historie of Travell into Virginia* (1612), for instance, finds himself at a loss to explain

> how this great Continent [of America] devided from the other three) should become stoared with beasts, and some Fowle, of one and the same kynd with the other partes [i.e. continents], especially with Lions, Beares, Deare, Wolves, and such like, as from the first Creation tooke begynning in their kynd, and [which] after the generall floud were not anew created, nor have their being or generation (as some other) *ex putredine*, *et sole*, [i.e.] by corruption and Heate. (Wright and Freund 1953:55)

What appeared particularly confusing to those reading the New World through the lens of Genesis was not only the fact that the Western hemisphere possessed too many species to have been transported on a human-built vessel, but also that the range of wildlife seemed odd, for, as José de Acosta (1588) stated, Noah seemed to have shipped many dangerous and destructive beasts across the Atlantic, while some of the more 'useful' ones, such as the horse, had been obviously 'forgotten' (Gliozzi 1977:567). A similarly bewildered response, one may suspect, would have filled those contemporaries seeking

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[40] See also John Weemese's *Portraiture of the Image of God in Man* (1627): "This curse to be a servant was laid, first upon a disobedient sonne *Cham*" (Vaughan 1995:164, emphasis added).
[41] The 1672 edition replaces *Benegroe* with *denigrate* (Robbins 1981:6.11.518).

confirmation of Noah's cursing of Africans, since none of the major Renaissance Bible translations actually makes such a suggestion.[42]

This lack of any scriptural root points towards a characteristic of Western appropriations of Genesis 9 which has not been drawn attention to yet, namely their orality. The several variants of Noah's curse, all of which are equally ludicrous, exist primarily as an oral text. When penned down and discussed in geographical and anthropological treatises, they bear the unmistakable characteristics of popular lore, of hearsay, and of rumour. Also, none of the extant varients successfully resolves the epistemological cruxes presented by the original text, which implies a certain distance towards their 'original' source. And, lastly, a wide oral dissemination is also suggested by the fact that poets and playwrights often chose to allude to the myth of Noah's curse merely by subtle allusion.

In view of the deliberate falsifications of Genesis as oral text(s), the question arises how during a historical period when corrupting the sacred text constituted one of the most serious public offences, crude distortions of Genesis could gain such wide dissemination. A plausible answer to this question is offered by Benjamin Braude, according to whom Renaissance thinkers often applied double standards when reconstructing biblical genealogies. While scholars like Joannes Boemus (*Omnium gentium mores leges et ritus*, 1520) or Sebastian Münster already in the incipient 16th century argue for debunking the 'Japhetite' roots of Europeans, the figures of Ham and Sem spearhead the categorisation of non-Europeans in anthropology and philology until the 20th century. In other words, "[t]he Noachic genealogy was retained, to a degree, for the Others, but it was rejected for the Selves" (Braude 1997:142). Eventually, "[t]he sons of Japhet came to be called Aryans and Caucasians. By this act, Japhet scuttled and jumped ship. He let Ham and Shem fend for themselves. He and they were no longer in the same boat" (Braude 1997:142).

Braude's reading is compelling to some degree. Focusing on Noah's 'foreign' sons Ham and Sem could certainly divert some attention from the 'domestic' Japhet. Then again, Japhet is not as completely eclipsed as Braude suggests. After all, several early 16th century Spanish chroniclers justify their hegemony over colonial territory by claiming a descent from Japhet's son Tubal, and in the 1560s and 1580s, some French contemporaries also followed suit.[43] In the early 17th century, Thomas Cooper's *Blessing of Japhet* (1615) adapts the same claim for English hegemony, as indicated above. However, in all these texts, the proposed genealogy is never fully elucidated, for obvious reasons. In

[42] The *Geneva Bible* (1560), *The Bishop's Bible* (1568) and the *Authorised Version* (1611) do not provide the least hint as to how the curse on Canaan is to be interpreted. The Catholic *Douai Bible* (1609) suggests that Canaan's servitude to Sem and Iaphet signifies that heretics shall be placed under the juristiction of the Catholic Church. Since none of these Bible translations connect Ham either to ethnicity or to skin colour, I strongly object to Robin Blackburn's claim that "[t]he printing of the Bible in the vernacular put in wider circulation the myths of Noah's curse or curses" (1997a:83). Quite to the contrary, one would suppose that a wider distribution of the proper biblical text would have furthered a more critical attitude towards such myths.

[43] Guillaume Postel (*Cosmographicae disciplinae*, 1561) and Guillaume du Bartas (*La seconde sepmaine*, 1584) both claim the same ancestral rights over non-European lands on the basis of a Japhetite origin (Gliozzi 1977:30-31).

the absence of any scriptural or empirical proof, placing trust in the myth effectively becomes an article of belief. The language purporting such myth does not aspire to explain or prove, but merely insinuates an intended meaning. Such a tacit acceptance of a non-European Ham or Canaan pervades a great variety of texts, including major Western cultural icons. A case in point is Milton's *Paradise Lost*, in which the archangel Michael fortells Ham's fall as follows:

Yet sometimes Nations will decline so low
But Justice, and some fatal curse annext
Deprives them of their outward liberty,
Their inward lost: Witness th'irreverent Son
Of him who built the Ark, who for the shame
Done to his Father, heard this heavy curse,
Servant of Servants, on his vicious Race,
Thus will this latter, as the former World,
Still tend from bad to worse till God at last
Wearied with their iniquities, withdraw
His presence from among them, and avert
His holy Eyes; resolving from thenceforth
To leave them to their own polluted ways[.] (Ricks 1989:12.97-110)

Analogous to Eve's or Satan's Fall, Ham's Fall is founded on 'irreverence' towards the father and saviour 'who built the Ark'. This motivation also comes strongly to the fore in Milton's source, the 16th-century French poem "L'Arche" by Guillaume De Salluste Sieur Du Bartas, according to which Ham's ultimate aim was to usurp God's place, and to erect a magnificent temple in the sands of Africa (Haynes 2002:36-37). In Du Bartas' understanding, Ham's transgression is comparable to Satan's, and represents an attempt to usurp power and to corrupt an extant (and hence 'natural') social order. Significantly, transgression and punishment attain a certain parallellism with Milton. Since Ham has *seen* his father's nakedness, God averts his eyes from the Hamites' "own polluted ways". And because Ham has forfeited 'inward liberty' by repeatedly performing wicked deeds, so too 'his vicious Race' must be penalised with a loss of their 'outward' freedom.

Even though Milton's archangel Michael fails to identify Noah's "irreverent son" as African, the context of colonial slavery is implicitly voiced in Adam and Eve's discussion of the division of labour which ushers in Eve's Fall. As Maureen Quilligan has convincingly argued, "Milton's poem imagines the […] duality between slave labor and free labor as a set of gendered relations" and thereby creates a correlation between "the woman and the slave, [i.e.] those who do the physical labor or reproduction and production" (1996:230). *Paradise Lost* thereby picks up a parallel between Ham and Eve which we find already in Renaissance discourse. In Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam* (1613), for instance, the royal martyr Mariam(ne) is condemned by Herod's official with the words: "Cham's servile curse to all your sex was given, / Because in Paradise you did offend" (Weller and Ferguson 1994:4.341-42).[44] With Milton and Cary, Ham thus occupies a 'feminine' status in an epistemological

[44] Cary's passage is pointed out in Schorsch (2004:152). For a close-reading of the play's discourse on Africa and Judaism, see Callaghan (1994:174-76).

sense, which is highly significant, since numerous contemporary texts 'other' non-Europeans as 'effeminate' (that is, mentally and physically 'frail') creatures.[45]

Another quality which situates Ham in the vicinity of Eve is his sexual licentiousness, which is often elaborated at length in Renaissance refashionings of Genesis 9. The Scotsman Abraham Rosse in his *Exposition of Genesis* (1626), for instance, blames Ham for introducing to the world "witchcraft, malice, contempt of religion, *leacherie and other vices*" (Haynes 2002:34, emphasis added), and the Protestant exegete Andrew Willet believes that Ham taught by his own example how "to lie with their mothers, sisters, daughters, with the male, and bruit beasts" (Haynes 2002:34). Samuel Purchas offers a whole catalogue of sexual perversions which he borrows directly from Annius of Viterbo:

> Cham, the Sonne of Noah, was by his Father banished for particular abuse of himselfe, and publike corruption of the World, teaching and practising those vices, which before had procured the deluge, as Sodomie, Incest, Buggerie; and was therefore branded with the name Chemesenua, that is, dishonest Cham (Purchas 1614:6.564, in Braude 1997:132)

One of the reasons why Ham is so frequently hypersexualised by Purchas and his contemporaries hinges on the fact that in the English tradition, fantasies of an uncontrollable libido are customarily evoked to legitimise systems of colonial oppression and servitude. Elizabethans and Jacobeans do not justify slavery on the grounds of conquest, as the Spaniards or the Portuguese do. Whereas in Catalonia and in other parts of the Iberian peninsula, slavery is legally underpinned by Roman law, according to which the unfree status of the *servus* derives from him or her being spared (*servare*) in battle (Freedman 1999:83, 327n.68), the English tradition vindicates servitude with reference to patristic and medieval authorities, who often rationalise such a hierarchy on the basis of biblical text, including Genesis 9.[46]

The early Church never seriously attempted to challenge practices of slavery, but often construed an analogy between serving secular and spiritual authorities. Already the apostle Paul exhorted believers with the words: "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, [...] as unto Christ" (Eph 6:5),[47] and the early Church promoted the same topos of the true believer as the 'slave of Christ' both in word and in deed. As an institution which gradually "became a large-scale slaveowner" itself (Blackburn 1997a:36), the medieval Church produced many arguments lending themselves perfectly to defending oppressive social hierarchies, including the colonial slavery emerging in the Renaissance. According to Paul Freedman, medieval Church authorities comment on secular servitude in four principal ways. For some, servitude is regarded as an act of secular injustice which forms part of a larger scheme to be overcome in a heavenly reversal of fortune (Freedman 1999:75). Other authors oppose such a view, and argue that slavery is consistent with divine order.

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[45] For examples of such 'effeminate' aliens, see the chapters on *Titus Andronicus* (pages 194-96) and *Othello* (pages 230-32).
[46] Notice, however, that some 17th century authors base their arguments partly on Roman law, such as Edward Coke's influential *Insitutes of the Laws of England* (1628) (Blackburn 1997a:236).
[47] The passage continues: "Not with eye[-]service, as men[-]pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free" (Eph 6:6-8).

Based on Aristotle's *Politics*, slaves are said to possess an innate character that fits them for toil and ill-treatment (Freedman 1999:73). A third view, mainly propagated by Augustine, Gregory the Great and Isidore of Seville, holds that slavery was introduced as a response to sinfulness and lust on behalf of the enslaved subject.[48] Fourthly, this theory of a self-inflicted punishment is interwoven with the concept of hereditary transmission. According to this viewpoint, a supposed primordial social equality has been irreparably destroyed by a multiplicity of moral falls, the most fatal one being Ham's, which introduced the concept of servitude to the world. This last theory features prominently in medieval justifications of servitude, which often 'prove' the 'Hamitic' origin of unfree serfs by describing them as sexually deviant (Freedman 1999:159-62). A lecherous disposition, which is supposedly innate in the 'servile' body, is not only seen as 'proving' a Hamitic or Canaanite descent, but simultaneously accentuates the 'need' for suppressing an unrestrained libido. In such arguments, the 'natural slave' occupies both the double role of Ham *and* Canaan, personifying on the one hand the notorious transgressor, as well as the degenerate child who must be contained in a preemptive act to curb an inherited desire.[49]

This act of imposing the figures of Ham and of Canaan onto the African body merely reinforces a concept of African hypersexuality which persists as a firmly-established topos from the classical to the modern period. Examples of exceedingly lustful Africans already feature in Greek and Roman texts and in classical iconography (Thompson 1989:107-09), and this legacy seems to have been greatly intensified by the advent of Christian colour symbolism following the Christianisation of the late Roman empire in the early 4th century AD. With patristic authorities such as Jerome, Augustine or Ambrose, the impious demons distracting the saints from their prayers are mostly Ethiopians (Courtès 1979:22, Devos 1985:62-65), and this idea is taken over by medieval sources. In one of Hoccleve's poems, evil spirits tempting the narrator-poet appear in the shape of "blake-faced ethiopiens" (Furnivall 1892:97.673), and Chaucer's Parson describes how Jerome, living in the desert, turned "blak as an Ethiopeen fore heete" while suffering "the brennynge of lecherie [which] boyled in al his body" (Benson 1987:X.345). The same legacy is continued in the Renaissance, and reverberates for instance in Francis Bacon's often-cited description of New Atlantis' "spirit of fornication" as a "little foul ugly Æthiop" (Spedding 1857-74:3.152).

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[48] Augustine writes in the *Quaestione in Heptateuchum* that even though slavery should be condemned, it is a legitimate countermeasure against "a general disorder that makes harsh measures necessary, and [against a] weak character and misconduct that is fittingly chastised by subordination" (Freedman 1999:76). This idea is made even more explicit by Isidore, who argues that servitude is necessary to restrain the will of those likely to behave sinfully. Baptism cleans the original sin of Adam, but potential malefactors must nevertheless be dominated by their masters according to the will of God (Freedman 1999:78).

[49] Notice that there is one major difficulty with exploiting Genesis 9 as a legal justification for slavery, namely the conundrum why Noah should not curse Ham but Canaan for Ham's transgression. Renaissance texts citing the myth of Noah's curse as a justification for slavery rarely comment on this sensitive point, perhaps in order to divert attention from this obvious weakness in the myth, or because the concept of such a second 'original sin' seemed a familiar concept not requiring any further defense. Indeed, both possibilities seem equally viable, especially since one finds arguments proposing the punishment of children for their parents' sins, for example in the famous dialogue *On the delays of divine vengeance* from Plutarch's *Moralia*, which was available to the Renaissance public in the translation of Philemon Holland (1603). The argument of Plutarch's dialogue has been paraphrased in Appendix 3.

Classical and medieval forerunners also authorise and inspire the numerous depictions of 'lecherous' Africans in Renaissance travel accounts. What seems to have greatly contributed to the hypersexualisation of the African is the misreading of traditional nudity as a design to maximise lust, and the misinterpretation of polygamous social structures as an arbitrary mingling serving the same purpose (Jordan 1968:39). Furthermore, such reports were confirmed by the most authoritative voice on Africa in the Renaissance, i.e. Leo Africanus. In an infamous passage, John Pory paraphrases Leo as saying that

> [t]he Negros […] leade a beastly kinde of life, being utterly destitute of the use of reason, of dexteritie of wit, and of all artes. Yea they so behave themselves, as if they had continually lived in a forrest among wilde beasts. *They have great swarmes of harlots among them; whereupon a man may easily coniecture their manner of living*. (Pory 1600:1.42, emphasis added)

Crucially, what most critics quoting this passage have failed to realise is that in instances like these, Pory often does not follow the spirit of Leo Africanus' original manuscript (1526), which has only recently been made available in a critical edition by Dietrich Rauchenberger (1999). Rather, such language is strongly influenced by Giovanni Battista Ramusio, an influential editor and printer, the first to publish Leo's narrative in Italian in 1550, who significantly altered the general verdict passed on African nations in the text, usually for the worse. The subordination of darker-skinned sub-Saharan Africans to North Africans in terms of honour, valour, and social customs is also largely of Ramusio's making, as is the continuous emphasis on the 'bestial' physicality of African tribes.[50] By rendering Ramusio's text into English, Pory perfectly caters to a European readership keen on having its prejudice of African 'lechery' confirmed by an authoritative 'native' account. Pory's edition thus leaves, as the editor himself unwittingly admits, much of Leo's Africa "undescribed".[51]

Corresponding to these travel narratives, the hypersexualised African is also highly prominent in Renaissance poetry and plays (Tokson 1982:82-105), and in the visual arts. Readings of Africans as lustful and impudent often culminate in speculations on the private parts alone hidden from the coloniser's eye, that is, the legendary, enormous members ascribed to the African male.[52] Even the comparatively 'moderate' travel account by Richard Jobson cannot help drawing attention to macrophallic Africans "who are furnisht with such members as are after a sort burthensome unto them" (1623:52). Another instance where this propensity powerfully comes to the fore are the portraits of Brazil-based Africans by Albert Eckhout (1610-66), which literally steam with phallic attributes,

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[50] For a concise summary of the main discrepancies between the original manuscript and Ramusio's edition, see Rauchenberger (1999:146-47). In all fairness, though, it should be pointed out that the quote reprinted above is neither purely Ramusio's nor Pory's invention, but a free rendering of Leo's statement that there are "many whores and cuckolds" in sub-Saharan Africa (Rauchenberger 1999:43r).

[51] See the title to Pory's introductory section: "A particular description of all the knowne borders, coastes and inlands of Africa, which Iohn Leo hath left *undescribed*" (1600:8, emphasis added). The headers of the following pages abbreviate this simply as "A description of places undescribed by Leo" (1600:10-57).

[52] Notice that this topos already appears in some medieval texts, such as in *Mandeville's Travels*, which claims that Africa "is so hot that thour [through] the grete hete of the eyr [air] […] manys [man's] privite hangith doun to here [their] kneis that dwellyn ther" (Seymour 1963:87).

Figure 37. Albert Ekhout. *African holding a spear* (1641) (Buvelot 2004:Fig. 55)

Figure 38. *Portrait ofa young man with an elephant's tusk in his hands* (c1643-50) (Buvelot 2004:Figs. 72)

such as giant ivory teeth, corn cobs, or penis-shaped palm trees (Figs. 37-38), all of which are conspicously absent in Eckhout's portraits of Mulattos and of Native Brazilians (Buvelot 2004:Figs. 50, 53, 56, 58). Moreover, on Ekhout's portrait of an *African holding a spear* (Fig. 37), the sexual threat the African warrior poses is further underscored by portraying him with a chequered loincloth which signals his hybrid, or fallen state.[53]

Two centuries later, this male African potency is also scientifically 'proven'. Charles White, an 18th century English anthropologist, claimed the following:

> That the Penis of an African is larger than that of an European, has, I believe, been shewn in every anatomical school in London. Preparations of them are preserved in most anatomical museums; and I have one in mine. I have examined several living negroes, and found it invariably to be the case. (1799:61)

The myth of the macrophallic African male is substantiated by all sorts of 'evidence', one of them being François la Rochefoucault's observation that the famous African Henry Moss, who rose to fame on account of losing his skin pigment through the disease called 'vitiligo', possessed "private parts [which], he [Moss] says, are less advanced in this progress [of losing their colour], although the change is begun in them" (Martin 2002:179). As the widely-documented Western obsession with the

[53] Exactly the same checkered pattern appears on the skirt of Eckhout's Black woman holding a basket, with her child (1641) (Buvelot 2004:Fig. 54).

African phallus clearly shows, there is an unspoken counternarrative to Ham's curse in which the roles of Ham and Noah have been reversed. Invariably, it is the European (male) observer who is obsessed with gazing on the nude African body. On the level of metalanguage, Ham's curse is all in the Western mind.

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Even though the Fall of Ham principally serves as a vehicle to hypersexualise, and thereby ward off, the physicality of male bodies, it also ushers in narratives of female corruption, at least in a colonial context. What prevents Noah's curse from becoming a universally-accepted explanation for the origin of somatic difference is the simple fact that skin colour is transferred via both sexes, and not exclusively via the *patri*linear line, as Aristotelian and Judeo-Christian teaching decrees.[54] By systemically silencing the generic function of the female, the myth of Noah's curse automatically creates a need to find an explanation of why 'dark' mothers can beget 'dark' sons to 'fair' lovers (Boose 1994:45-46). The myth of Ham as the begetter of colour, in other words, unavoidably fuels complementary myths of colour as resulting from a female Fall.[55]

In the eighteenth century, the uncanny ability of 'black' mothers to overpower 'white' fathers leads some authors to attribute colour to the female body exclusively, a belief mythologised in the figure of a 'black' Eve.[56] In the early modern period, however, explanations of the power of 'black' mothers over 'white' fathers pursue a different line of thought. Based on Aristotle's premise that human offspring are gendered by the male and merely nurtured in the female (Page 1953:1.18.724b), all characteristics distinguishing children from their fathers are rejected as 'corruptions' deriving from the female. Renaissance authors also subscribe to Pliny's claim that the female's power to transform the male seed is determined by the mother's "recollections of sights and sounds and actual sense-impressions received at the time of conception" (Page 1956-63:7.12.52). While according to Pliny these stimuli 'corrupting' a child via its mother may be visual, acoustic or sensory, Renaissance proponents of such a theory usually limit the human faculty responsible for such influence to sight only. In other words, it is not the hearing of foreign tongues, or the touch of non-European bodies, but

[54] This does not merely apply to the genealogies in Genesis, but likewise to the genealogy of Jesus (Mt 1:2-17, Lk 3:23-38).
[55] Even though the myths of visual impression and female imagination described below are well-known (Snowden 1970:194, Aubrey 1993, Sollors 1997:52-54, Hendricks 2000:694-95), no study that I am aware of has pointed out the crucial link to the myth of Ham.
[56] One of the first to offer such a daring proposition is the naval surgeon John Atkins who, in his reflections on the origin of skin colour, writes in 1735 that "*tho' it be a little Heterodox*, I am persuaded the black and white Race have, ab origine, sprung from different-coloured first Parents" (Jordan 1968:17, emphasis added). The concept of a 'black' Eve was also known to Samuel Johnson. In 1763, Boswell records Samuel Johnson as discussing three common explanations of the origin of 'blackness': the myth attributing colour to "the posterity of Ham, who was cursed", to "the heat of the sun", or to the creation of "two kinds of men, one black and another white" (Carretta 1999:xxiii). Further instances where the topos resurfaces are Hugh Henry Brackenridge's satirical novel *Modern Chivalry* (1792), and a door panel of the *Alte Apotheke* in Calw, Germany (c1770-80) (Sollors 1997:32-33, Fig.9).

the sight and imagining of 'blackness' and spotted patterns which is considered harmful and potentially corrupting the purity of future offspring

Crucially, this teaching of maternal impression echoes not only through Renaissance literature,[57] but also through contemporary scientific discourse. Taking the classical narratives of maternal impression at face value, the French physician Ambroise Paré (1573), translated by Thomas Johnson in 1634, in all earnestness advises men "to keep the woman, all the time she goeth with childe, from the sight of such shapes and figures" which could have a detrimental effect on the new-born child (Johnson 1634:24.2.888, 25.7.977-78). The Englishman Helkiah Crooke (1615), having cited similar stories (5.14.300, 5.20.309-311), after some deliberation also singles out maternal impression as the key factor affecting human gendering, and analogous views are suggested by other contemporary.[58] According to most of these texts, maternal impression is not only triggered by actual objects gazed upon, but also by dream-like images evoked during sleep and during the act. As Edmund Gayton notes in his *Pleasant Notes upon Don Quixot[e]* (1654), ladies should be prevented from reading romances lest they "g[o] to bed full of Imagination […], and forget who they are under, and who is over them" (Williams 1994:704).[59]

These theories of maternal impression may be of great consequence for Renaissance male discourse on women in two ways. Firstly, if visual images are as harmful as these myths suggest, this may be seen as requiring a close guardianship for those unwilling or unable to contain themselves. As Richard Brathwaite expresses it in his guidelines on how to raise the *English Gentlewoman* (1641), if one considers "what rare effects [a]re sometimes drawne from a Morian-picture being onely hung up in a ladies Chamber" (*OED* "morian" B), then how much more dangerous would it be to expose 'fair' ladies to the sight and company of actual dark-skinned males? Secondly, such theories open up the possibility of mythologising colour as a monstrosity generated by the female mind. On the question of whether 'maternal impression' should be regarded as an accidental mishap or a deliberate choice, Renaissance sources differ. Antonio de Torquemada's *Spanish Mandeville of Miracles* (1600) regards

[57] Probably the most frequently cited narrative in the Renaissance describing the effect of such a visual impression is Heliodorus' late classical romance *Aethiopica*, translated into English by Thomas Underdowne (1569), in which the Aethiopian Queen Persina gives birth to a white child after having gazed intently on a picture of fair Andromeda during the act (1569:10.138r). A biblical narrative tallying with Heliodorus' myth is the episode in Genesis in which Jacob dexterously breeds striped, speckled, and spotted sheep from Laban's white flock by having them drink and mate in front of poplar branches, whose bark has been partly removed in stripes (Gen 30:31-43). Similar narratives of offspring being miraculously shaped by visual stimuli also occur with Augustine (Sollors 1997:427n.15), with Jerome (Snowden 1970:194), and with other patristic and medieval writers.

[58] See Pierre Bourdieu's *Histoire Prodigeuses*, translated into English in 1589 (Aubrey 1993:223-25), or Thomas Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646) (Hendricks 2000:694-95).

[59] This belief in the power of sight and of the imagination comes heavily under attack in the Enlightenment. Immanuel Kant, for instance, perceptively points out in his *Bestimmung des Begriffs einer Menschenrace* (1785) that given the infinity of human imagination, there would theoretically be no limits to the appearance of children shaped by maternal impression, which is obviously not the case (Sollors 1997:427n.22). Roughly two decades prior to Kant, Laurence Sterne parodies the theory of maternal impression at the very outset of *Tristam Shandy*, which tells of how Tristam's 'animal spirits' were greatly disturbed by an unseemly thought crossing his mother's mind during the act of conception. During the Renaissance, though, visual and imaginary 'impressions' are still genuinely believed to affect the process of human generation.

women falling under the spell of a monstrous 'impression' as victims, rather than as deliberate transgressors,[60] and also Helkiah Crooke, the most prolific Renaissance writer on the subject, denies the possibility of a wilful act when maintaining that

> if the Imagination alone were the cause of the similitude [of these images and offspring], then no infant should be deformed, neither should they be troubled with hereditary diseases; for no mother wisheth or imagineth evill to her owne children. (1615:5.14.310)

However, in some texts, such as Augustinus Torniellus' *Annales sacri et profani* (Cologne 1622), 'maternal impression' is not viewed as a fateful accident encroaching upon a hapless female, but as the sign of a moral lapse of the female mind. Interestingly, Torniellus also establishes a direct link of female imagination with the Fall of Ham. According to Torniellus, Ham's wife gave birth to a Chus with negroid features and dark skin, but not because this colour was ingrained in Ham's seed. Instead, Ham's wife either imagined something dark during Chus' conception, or longed for 'blackness' during his gestation (Allen 1963:119), thereby sharing the same unnatural desire which led her husband to mock Noah.

In his recent study on *Constructing 'Monsters' in Shakespearean Drama and Early Modern Culture* (2002), Mark Thornton Burnett suggests that

> dramatists and medical authorities *took delight* in listing occasions on which, because of an arresting hue that had caught the female eye, speckled lambs had been born to white sheep, piebald colts to white mares and black children to white parents. (2002:118, emphasis added).

Burnett's assumption that Elizabethans and Jacobeans actually relished contemplating the effect of such images fails to recognize the more troubling subtexts such discourse hides. What the myth of 'maternal impression' silences is the natural power invested in the female body, and in non-European women in particular. (Male) Renaissance authors seem most unwilling to acknowledge the female contribution to human generation, and appear highly disconcerted by the thought of 'black' mistresses giving birth to 'black' children. The systemic denial of a more balanced theory of human conception exacerbates the split of received text and actual experience which has been identified as the main source of metaphysical crisis at the outset of this study. The myths of Noah's curse and maternal impression aggravate such sentiments and suggest that a great many axioms of Western learning are yet to crumble in the face of new colonial encounters. The code of the spotted, in other words, is continuously haunted by an unspoken subtext questioning its validity.

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[60] Torquemada retells the anecdote of a mother whose "child [was] all covered over with rough haire" because she had previously intensely contemplated "the picture of Saint Iohn Baptist clothed in hairy skinns" (1600:10r), and he adds yet another tale involving an actor who played the devil in a comedy, and returned home and made love to his wife without taking off his "deformed" costume. Due to his "ouglie shape" his wife was "delivered of a creature representing the very likenes of the devill, in forme so horrible, that no devil of hell could bee figured more lothsome or abhominable" (1600:10r-11v).

Encoding and Decoding Symbols of the Spotted

> The external blackness of the Ethiopians [...] is as innocent and natural [...] as spots in the leopards
> (Cugoano. *Thoughts and Sentiments* (1787) (Carretta 1999:130)

The previous chapters have shown how Renaissance discourse utilises images of bestiality, illness, and lechery as easily displaceable and mutually interchangeable symbols of otherness within an intercultural context. In the sources analysed above, this discourse of othering constantly oscillates between the different archetypes thus employed. On an allegorial level, leopards are considered lecherous creatures diseased in body and mind, lepers are assumed to have incurred 'beast-like' deformities by acts of lechery, and lechers are seen as ruled by a sickening, beast-like libido.[1] As has been emphasised throughout the foregoing chapters, this symbolism is not limited to the anglophone tradition alone, but constitutes part of a legacy which is widely understood and continually reproduced throughout the Western tradition. In anglophone discourse, though, these symbols are particularly significant since they are exploited not only to magnify fears of the non-European body as an imminent threat to a supposedly homogeneous, 'pure' society, but also to legitimise a systemic social segregation codified as law during the Restoration period.

There is reason to believe that these images of bestiality, illness and sexual perversion do not arise accidentally out of a misguided, warped anthropology, but that they are consciously invoked to vindicate and reinforce a customary othering of certain groups and individuals. Robin Blackburn has justly drawn attention to the paradox that colonial subjects were exploited for nothing but their intelligence, while the discourse of 'othering' imposed on them constantly negated their intellectual capacity: "[S]laves were useful to the planters *precisely because* they were men and women capable of understanding and executing complex orders," whereas the discourse foregrounding their somatic, physiognomic and cultural difference served to deny the "basic similarity between [masters] and [their] property" (Blackburn 1997a:12, emphasis added). That the symbolism analysed above must have served the same kind of conscious 'othering' is validated by the fact that, in early modern discourse, the self-same topoi are indiscriminately imposed on a variety of different ethnicities. During the medieval and early modern period, for instance, the figure of Ham is rediscovered among Africans, Native Americans, 'Orientals', 'Gypsies' and unfree Europeans, depending on the political and commercial interest prevailing at a particular point in time. The malleability of these stereotypes represents a quality which some critics have identified as one of the key characteristics of 'racial' discourse. As Audrey Smedley states in her study on *Race in North America* (1993), "the racial worldview is a dynamic one", and constantly "subject to oscillations in interpretation, from time to

[1] For an example of a source cojoining these three archetypes, see Thomas Howell's *Devises* (1581), where a series of short poems oscillates between references to the unchangeable Ethiopian, to the leprous body of Cressida, to the Plinian lion-leopard myth, and to the Freudian image of a "toyling Oxe [which] the Plow doth pull ("Ruine the rewarde of Vice", "He lykeneth his lotte to Virgils", "All of greene Willow" and "All of greene Lawrell" (Frowde 1906:18-25)).

time intensified or contracted, or modified and/or reinvented in response to changing circumstances" (1993:25-26). For researchers of Western stereotypes, this effecitvely means that the scope of enquiry must be widened to an analysis of various social and ethnic groups in order to be able to flesh out both the oscillation between the various target groups, as well as the utter arbitrariness with which certain groups and individuals are targeted by such discourse.

By scrutinising the polysemy within these three archetypal symbols of otherness, the previous chapters have documented how human beings are bestialised, pathologised and hypersexualised in early modern colonial discourse, and for what purpose. What has been lacking so far, though, is a detailed analysis of the intercultural environment giving rise to the symbolism analysed above. This section, therefore, will attempt to determine (1) how this rhetoric of the spotted interrelates with an early modern colonial context, (2) by what kind of communicative channels it is disseminated in society, and (3) to what extent such a rhetoric is opposed by Renaissance writers and by those othered by such discourse, as far as such a reception can be documented on the basis of extant source material.

In the previous sections, the texture of the symbolism of the spotted has been explained through its historical genesis. The condemnation of 'hybrid' patterns is, as the classic study by Mary Douglas (1966) has shown, already present in the earliest of sources in the Judeo-Christian tradition. However, one may also think of the problematising of spotted and striped patterns as an encounter phenomenon. When exploring unknown territories, Europeans constantly face members of non-Western cultures in which the wearing of spots and stripes represents a positive form of self-identification. There are numerous indigenous societies all over the globe which lend their body a cultural meaning by means of body painting, tattooing and scarification. As many Renaissance sources reveal, such practices were widely present during the age of exploration, and they were immediately noticed by European explorers during their 'discoveries'. A conflation of these rites with Western conceptualisations of evil often directly fed into associations of non-Europeans with otherness, and greatly facilitated the marginalisation of indigenous cultures and of non-Christian religions. Yet, if the othering of non-Europeans as spotted creatures was to have any noticeable impact on the defining of interethnic relations, it depended on a wide dissemination within Renaissance culture. Unfortunately, critics on 'race' have hitherto shown relatively little interest in the crucial question of how attitudes to 'race' were 'learnt' and 'taught' at a particular time, in spite of the fact that knowledge of these processes is vital for understanding the rise and decline of cultural and ethnic bias. This chapter will attempt to redress this lack by exploring some of the communicative channels by which these symbols were disseminated in the anglophone tradition.

In addition, it is crucial to realise that the 'logic' underlying the symbols of the spotted was intermittently opposed both from 'without' and 'within' the Western tradition. Unfortunately, texts

from non-European cultures chronicling the reactions of those 'othered' by such discourse during the Renaissance are difficult to obtain.[2] Given the dire lack of contemporaneous sources, one is forced to turn elsewhere – for example to the earliest anglophone publications by Africans in the late 18th century – in order to gain some impression of how this symbolism may have been received and understood within ethnicities sharing a different cultural code. Whereas writing a transcultural history of the symbolism of the spotted is fraught with difficulties, close-reading the resistance to such rhetoric from within Renaissance culture is comparatively easier to undertake. In fact, it is possible to cite a considerable number of early modern texts which oppose such a rhetoric on different levels. How these voices operate will be illustrated in a tentative characterisation of five different types of responses by which such criticism is articulated.

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In a study aspiring to embrace a transcultural perspective, Renaissance symbols of the spotted should not only be read in the context of their own making, but also against the backdrop of non-Western traditional forms of tattooing, scarification and body painting which have existed for many centuries all over the globe. The geographical spread (see Fig. 39) and the longevity of these customs are simply overwhelming.[3] Temporary and permanent body modifications can be dated back as early as the ice age, and it seems that the adorning of the human body constituted one of the first conscious acts of cultural, religious and artistic expression.[4] As Michel Thévoz has adeptly remarked, ornating the human body is in effect an archaic form of writing elevating the human body above other forms of life which, by denaturalising it, lends it cultural meaning. Conforming to a culturally-defined outward appearance creates a sense of belonging which is of fundamental importance for the human psyche. Physical markings are therefore a social text fulfilling many of the functions modern societies have delegated to sophisticated bureaucracies. Markings indicate a personal affiliation to a particular group, and specify the bearer's social status. Analogous to dress codes, the wearing of physical marks is also often rigorously codified. In many African, Native American and South-East Asian societies, only a physically 'marked' physique is considered a body which is enculturated, meaningful, and socially accepted (Thévoz 1985:7-8, 61-62).

[2] For the sub-African continent, for example, there are virtually no written sources documenting the arrival of the Europeans, with the exception of some records from the Ethiopian kingdom in the Horn of Africa. For an elucidation of this point, see my preface (page ix).

[3] For a comprehensive survey of such practices today, see Karl Gröning's *Decorated Skin: A World Survey of Body Art* (1997).

[4] An impressive survey of prehistoric body painting and tattooing is offered by Thévoz (1985:9-21).

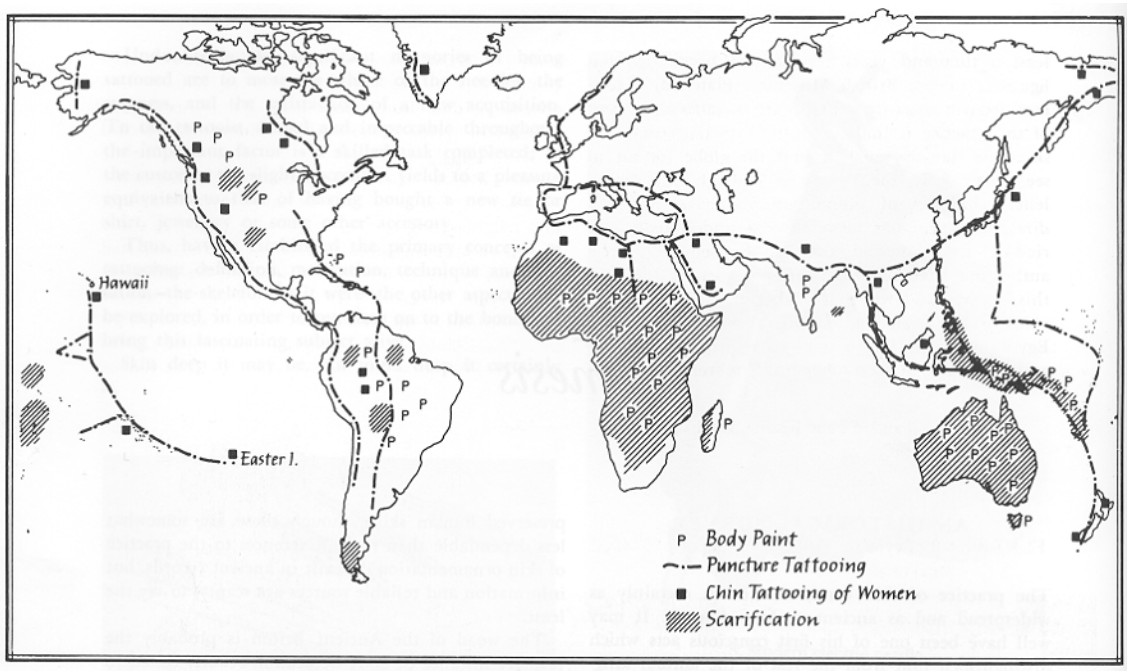

Figure 39. Map showing areas of tattooing and allied customs practised among various cultures until the 20th century (Scutt and Gotch 1986:22)

In the course of their 'discoveries', European explorers repeatedly encounter natives who dress themselves in particoloured clothing (such as the Maya in precolonial Yucatan (Gates 1978:33)), or who adorn themselves with body paint, with tattoos, and with ritual scars. In 1530 Cabeza de Vaca stumbles across several nations in the Gulf of Mexico who ornate their bodies with red and blue tattooings (Scutt and Gotch 1986:27), and Richard Eden's *Decades* (1555) describes in detail the body painting of a Native American who "had a great part of his body paynted with a blacke colour which never fadeth[,] […] much lyke unto that wherwith the Mores paynt them selves in Barberie in token of nobilitie" (Hadfield 2001:247). On his third voyage in 1568-69, the slave trader John Hawkins observes how the natives of Florida "paint their bodies also with curious knots, or antique worke, […] which painting, to make it continue the better, they use with a thorne to pricke in their flesh" (Hakluyt 1600:3.517), and similar observations on Floridian tattooing are repeated two decades later by the Dutch traveller Jan Huyghen van Linschoten.[5] Likewise, the reports on Martin Frobisher's exploration of a North-West passage (1576-81) also contain descriptions of Inuits who had "their faces marked or painted over with small blewe spottes" (Best 1978:1972).[6]

[5] According to Linschoten's *Voyages into West and East Indies* (1598), the inhabitants of Florida wear "skinnes finely painted" and "paint their bodies, and also their armes and thighes, with many figures, which colour wil not off, […] it is so printed and sunke into the flesh" (1598:218).

[6] See also the ship's log of Frobisher's first voyage kept by Christopher Hall, which was reprinted in Richard Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations* (1589): "[T]he women are marked in the face with blewe streekes downe the cheekes, and round the eies" (Quinn 1979:4.207). Another reference to tattooing features in the report on Frobisher's second voyage by Dionyse Settle: "Also, some of their women race their cheekes, and forehead, and the wristes of their handes, whereupon they lay a colour, which continueth darke azurine" (1577:25, Quinn 1979:4.211). For further references to tattoos and body painting among polar peoples, see the physical descriptions David B. Quinn (1981) has catalogued in his survey of ethnographic sources from 1497 to 1611.

Yet the self-same phenomenon is observed on other continents, too. In 1595 Alvaro de Mendana discovers the famous Marquesa islands, roughly 1200 miles west of Peru, whose Polynesian inhabitants tattoo their entire bodies with intricate patterns (Gilbert 2000:55). Samuel Purchas' section on the discovery of Asia features at least eight references to tattooing in different travelling accounts.[7] And finally, facial marks are also reported from the African continent. In 1554 John Lok is struck by the "strange tattoos and jewelry decorating the people of Guinea" (Brown 1996:38). On his trip to the Gambia region, Richard Jobson takes note of some natives wearing "party-coloured" clothes (1623:55), of others bearing "mark[s] under both their eyes, with three blewe stroakes" (1623:100), and of a group having "the deepest, and largest printed [scars] upon the backe that ever wee saw" (1623:94). Similarly, Abraham Hartwell's translation of Philippo Pigafetta's *Report of the Kingdome of Congo* (1597) describes practices of scarification in Congo, which allegedly renders the natives 'deformed', 'devilish', 'bestial', and cannibal-like:

> They [i.e. The Agagi in the Congo region] doo use to marke themselves above the lippe upon their cheekes with certain lines which they make with *Iron* instruments and with fire. […] [T]hose marks in their faces, it is a strange thing to behold them. For it is in deede a very dreadfull & devillish sight. They are of bodie great, but deformed and live like beastes in the fielde, and feede upon mans flesh. (Hartwell 1597:204-05, in Vaughan 1994:56)

As these examples show, there is a constant social subtext of spotted native bodies in the context of non-Western exploration and colonialisation. This subtext is not only recorded in written text, but acknowledged in contemporary illustrations, too. Many Renaissance depictions of non-Europeans from different continents show natives adorning themselves with body paint or tattoos (Figs. 40-43).[8]

Figure 40. An Indio adorned with body paint, from Christoph Weiditz' From *Indian Nobles* (1529) (Gröning 1997:35)

Figure 41. A Canadian Inuit and her child kidnapped by French sailors in 1566 in an anonymous leaflet printed by Hans Wolf Glaser in Nüremberg (Gilbert 2000:174)

[7] On descriptions of tattooing in Asia, see Purchas (1617:487, 571, 743, 813, 853, 876, 955, 958). The passages are pointed out by Fleming (2000:67 n.32).

[8] See also Jan van der Straet's famous engraving *America* (c.1600), where the female figure allegorising the American continent wears a tattooed ornament around her leg (Hulme 1986: Fig. 1, Waddington 2000:288-291).

Figure 42. American natives, woodcut from a German broadsheet , c.1505 (Orgel 1987:34 Fig.8)

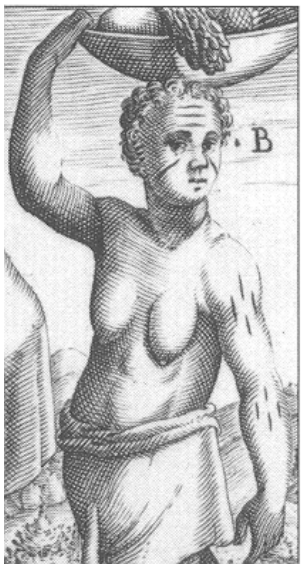

Figure 43. African woman from Theodor de Bry's *Small Voyages* (1604) (Morgan 1997:Fig. VI)

As the puzzled reactions by European travellers and explorers demonstrate, these 'mysteriously' marked bodies become a primary site where the two widely-shared 'cultural codes' – in Roland Barthes' sense of the term[9] – interfere. Western and non-Western interpretations of the symbolic code of the spotted differ considerably, and are often mutually exclusive. A physical mark may be understood as a sign of punishment or reward (a 'batch of honour'), of exclusion or inclusion, of impurity or of having successfully mastered a rite of passage. This incongruity in interpreting physical markings has a lasting effect on the entire (de)valuation of non-European physicality in the Western tradition. For the purpose of distinguishing European explorers, settlers or colonial masters from the natives surrounding them, European sources often exploit unknown symbols in order to construct cultural, religious, physical and mental difference. The cultural code by which natives decipher their physical mark is dismissed as 'mad' or 'perverted', and subordinated to a European reading of spotted patterns. By systematically denying the culturally-defined polysemy inherent in symbols, 'spotted' natives could easily be misconstrued as worshippers of impurity and evil within a Western discourse. As a result, just as "[s]kin colour came to serve as an excellent and readily identified marker which everyone carried around on their face and limbs, ruling out any hope of imposture or dissimulation" (Blackburn 1997a:14), so too non-Western rites of marking the human body became the most successful semiotic representation of physical and spiritual 'deformity'. Whereas skin colour "furnished an identity document in an epoch when many were illiterate"

[9] In his pathbreaking *S/Z,* Roland Barthes distinguishes five different codes three of which occupy a salient place in this study, namely semantic, symbolic and cultural codes. Semantic codes are often based on the deep structure of symbolic codes which are typically built on binary opposites. This symbolic code is deciphered via cultural codes which may be defined as encompassing any science or body of knowledge (including clichés, proverbs, popular sayings) shared among a particular group or society (Barthes 1976:23-24).

(Blackburn 1997a:15), the concept of the 'spotted' colonial body as a 'debased' human authorised the 'othering' of non-Europeans epistemologically.

Western travellers possess a fundamentally different understanding of the symbolic value of physical marks than most non-European cultures because of tendencies predating the early modern period by many centuries. Western attitudes towards body painting, tattooing and scarification have been shaped by the purity laws codified in Judeo-Christian thought. Judaism, Christianity and Islam have traditionally prohibited adding any such marks to the human body. To make "cuttings in the flesh" is explicitly forbidden in Mosaic Law, in orthodox Judaic culture,[10] and in Islam, although some Islamic cultures do not seem to have observed this rule very strictly.[11] In the New Testament, applying visible marks is repeatedly dismissed as a heathen custom. The Book of Relevation, for instance, prophecies the destruction of those "marked on the right hand or the forehead" with the name of the blasphemous, seven-headed, leopard-like beast (Rev 13:16), and promises everlasting life to those who will "not receiv[e] its [the beast's] mark on their foreheads" (Rev 20:4). Even though tattooing or painting the human body are not explicitly forbidden in the New Testament (unless constituting a form of idolatry), they constitute rites which cannot contribute towards human salvation any more than other rites involving body modification, such as circumcision.

At the Council of Nicaea (325), tattoos and similar body ornamentations were abolished, and in the late Roman empire, Emperor Constantine attempted to enforce such a ban on the grounds that one should not mutilate "God's image in man" (Scutt and Gotch 1986:26). Later commentators, though, often condemned tattooing only if it served the worship of pagan deities. On the Council of Calcuth in Northumberland in 787 AD, for instance, it was decided that

> [w]hen an indivdual undergoes the ordeal of tattooing for the sake of God, he is to be greatly praised. But one who submits himself to be tattooed for superstitious reasons in the manner of the heathens will derive no benefit thereof. (Gilbert 2000:150).

In spite of intermittent expressions of tolerance, tattooing seems to have gradually declined both in England as well as in Europe during the medieval period. With respect to the British isles, it is interesting to note that with Celts and Anglo-Saxons, tattooing was still fairly common. This popularity is probably also reflected in the legend that after the Battle of Hastings (1066), the heavily mutilated body of the Anglo-Saxon King Harold could only be identified by means of a tattoo on his chest, which bore the name of his mistress Edith. By way of contrast, the Normans categorically rejected the practice of tattooing, and frequently associated it with barbarism and heathenism. William

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[10] See Lev 19:28 ("Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the Lord."); Lev 21:5 ("They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in their flesh."); Deut 14:1 ("Ye are the children of the Lord your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead."). Scutt and Gotch note a striking absence of tattooing with Orthodox Jews still today (1986:25).

[11] Several Berber groups and the inhabitants of Yemen, for instance, have never accepted the banning of body painting and tattooing, and still practice their famous facial tattoos and *siyala* paintings on hand and feet (Thévoz 1985:68-71, Gröning 1997:120-123).

of Malmesbury (12th c.), for example, dismisses Anglo-Saxons who have "their skin marked with punctured designs" as people who "[a]re accustomed to eat[ing] excessively, and to drink[ing] until they vomi[t]" (Stubbs 1889:3.§245.244).

During the Middle Ages techniques of tattooing seem to have died out in the West, and became firmly associated with non-European cultures. Whereas several branches of Christianity, notably the Armenian, the Ethiopian, the Syriac and the Russian orthodox Church, retained rites of tattooing, the Roman Church did not approve of such 'baptisms by fire'. Knowledge of such rites was only brought back to Europe by travellers such as Marco Polo,[12] or by pilgrims returning from the Holy Land. Jerusalem pilgrims frequently returned with Christian symbols, such as the Jerusalem cross, and in exceptional cases also with national symbols, tattooed on their body.[13] However, to conclude that tattooing had therefore become popular or even respectable in Renaissance England, as Juliet Fleming's "'alternative' history of British tattoing "(2000:68) claims, does not seem borne out by the majority of contemporary sources. Tattooing never fully recovered from the stigma attached to it during the formative years in which medieval European culture developed, and it retained this affinity with 'otherness' until the twentieth century. The custom of wearing secular, individualised tattoos was brought to Europe by sailors returning from James Cook's first voyage to the Pacific islands in the late 18th century, and was until very recently overwhelmingly associated with marginal groups (such as sailors, prostitutes or gang members). This 'foreign' origin of the tattoo is still evident in its name, for the term is actually borrowed from a Polynesian expression for 'knocking' or 'striking'.[14]

By the early modern period, Europeans intuitively regard the display of temporary or permanent marks on the skin as an alien custom, also because the voluntary wearing of such patterns diametrically opposes the European custom of branding criminals, slaves, prostitutes and other outcasts. Like the aversion against tattooing, this concept of punishing by means of a physical marking also has ancient roots. The branding of offenders was already known to the ancient Egyptians, to the Greeks, to the Romans, and to Europeans during the Middle Ages (Thévoz 1985:64-65). Several classical and medieval authors preoccupied themselves with the question of how tattoos and brandmarks could be removed after a criminal had been rehabilitated, which testifies to the dissemination and importance of this form of ostracising outcasts at the time (Scutt and Gotch 1986:138). In the Renaissance period, the branding of criminals still flourished, and it was only in the

[12] Marco Polo offers one of the earliest extant descriptions of tattooing techniques in his description of the provinces of 'Zardandan', 'Caugigu' and the city of 'Zayton' (Marsden 1904:2.50.84-85, 117, 235).

[13] See for instance the case of William Lithgow, who visited the Holy Land in 1612 and on the occasion volunteered to have a tattooist "ingrave on our severall Armes upon Christ's Sepulcher the name of Jesus, and the Holy Crosse; being our owne option, and desire" (Scutt and Gotch 1986:27).

[14] The term *tattoo* is believed to represent an approximation of *tattow*, *tatau* or *tattaw*, all of which derive from *ta* ('knocking' or 'striking' in Polynesian) or from *tau* (a Javanese word for 'wound' or 'scar'). It was adopted in other European languages with only minor variations: German *Tätowierung*, French *tatouage*, Italian *tatuaggio*, Portuguese *tatuagens*, Danish *tatoveringer* (Scutt and Gotch 1986:30).

19th century that the custom was comprehensively abolished in most parts of Europe, including Britain (Thévoz 1985:65). In the transatlantic slave trade and in systems of colonial slavery, those enslaved were often branded with the initials of their proprietors to ensure an unambiguous identification of ownership in case they escaped. This custom seems to have been in use with slave traders and slave owners of various nationalities, Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, English or French, and it is occasionally also alluded to in literary texts of the Renaissance period.[15]

That the Western tradition gradually reduces physical marks to signifying 'otherness' is also evident on a philological level. With the ancient Greeks and Romans, the term used for 'tattoo' and 'body marking', *stigma*, did not necessarily bear any discriminatory meaning. Since the medieval period, though, its negative connotations have prevailed, and during the modern period have become the only meaning of the term.[16]

The Western tradition thus literally *stigmatises* the tattooed or painted colonial body on two accounts. Firstly, the colouring of the human body is dismissed as an alien custom which is incompatible with Western norms. Secondly, indigenous natives wearing bodily ornamentation are frequently discredited as mentally, physically and morally inferior, since by their own attire they reproduce a code which the Western tradition restricts to those outlawed from society. This clash of cultural codes directly feeds into a deliberate misinterpretation of dress codes and other visual and oral codes, such as the contemptuous dismissal of unintelligible languages, as 'barbaric'. Furthermore, the Western cultural code is subsequently supported by a legal code which demonstrates the hegemony of its own voice by proving that 'spotted' and 'striped' bodies are indeed bereft of freedom of speech, and of a cultural code of their own. Early modern colonial discourse, then, attempts to other non-Europeans by perverting the original meaning behind indigenous ornamentations of the body. To what extent it succeeds in doing so remains to be discussed below.

As the previous chapters have shown, particoloured patterns are not just brimming with meaning. Rather, they are also exceptional in the sense that they *always require a narrative*. Leopards, peacocks, and other particoloured animals are never accepted as 'neutral' primordial bodies, but they are imagined to be creatures whose unusual colouring has arisen through a metamorphosis of an earlier, uniform appearance. In rare cases, this metamorphosis is seen as signifying a blessing, as with the Argus-eyed peacock, or with medieval allegories of Christ as the panther. Predominantly, though,

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[15] See for example James Mabb's translation of Mateo de Alemán's picaresque novel *The Life of Guzman de Alfareche*, in which the imprisoned rogue Guzman receives a letter from his Mulatta mistress reassuring him of her unconditional devotion with the words: "And if for to supply thy wants, it were needfull that I should be sold, *brand this my face with two hot yrons, and set a Slave[']s marke in eyther cheeke, and make sale of me in the open market*: for asssure thy selfe, I shall esteeme it the greatest happines[s] that can befall me, that my bondage, may worke thy freedome" (Mabb 1623:2.328, emphasis added).

[16] The term *stigma* (Latin *stigma*, Greek *στίγμα*) is etymologically related to the verb *to stick*. In the Renaissance, *stigma* could still be used in the original sense of "[a] mark made upon the skin by burning with a hot iron (rarely, by cutting or pricking)" (*OED* "stigma", n.1, "stick", v.1).

hybridity signifies corruption or a postlapsarian state, as in the mythical Falls of Eve, Cain, Ham, Syphilis, Io, the Bacchants, the Plinian leopard or the medieval leper. When we close-read Western interpretations of the non-Western body, the question arises whether these narratives of corruption still prevail when particoloured clothing is replaced by particoloured skin. Skin and clothing are often interchangeable entities designed to fulfil the same function of offering protection against the gaze and defining the bearer's personal status and social affiliation. Then again, they are opposites in the sense that one negates the other: tattoos and clothing are not simultaneously visible, and – as has been shown above – Western discourse also assigns to them diametrically opposed symbolic values. Clothing preserves the unity and purity of the human body, whereas tattooing destroys it. Bearing in mind these larger trends characterising Western thought, it does not seem surprising that colonial discourse should continually speak of 'sinful', 'lusty' or 'fallen' non-Europeans as spotted bodies.

Iberian sources frequently dismiss tattooing and body painting as a heathen custom. In 1519 Cortez and other Spanish conquistadors are horrified to see that natives not only worship devils, but have also managed to imprint the images of their idols on their skin. According to Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdez, who authors the first and most comprehensive account of the conquest of Mexico, the natives "imprinted on their bodies the images of their demons, held and perpetuated in black color for as long as they live, by piercing the flesh and the skin, and fixing in it the cursed figure" (Gilbert 2000:99). The Spanish seem to have made great attempts to eradicate these customs, as emerges from Friar Diego de Landa's *Yucatan before and after the conquest* (1566). De Landa describes how before the Spanish conquest, the natives of Yucatan adorned their skin and used to "ridicule those who are not tattooed" (Gates 1978: 1.22.35). According to de Landa, this traditional tattooing constituted one of the "many and […] great errors in which they have lived" (Gates 1978: 2.51.112) which the Spanish strove to eradicate together with other expressions of pagan worship. With how much violence the Spanish tortured the natives of Yucatan in order to wipe out traditional customs and religions is well-known (Gates 1978:115-119). Whether or not eliminating tattooing represented a major goal remains debatable, yet certain it is that the Spanish saw the marking of the human body as an infallible indicator that the natives were not willing to trade their native culture and religion for Catholicism and the Spanish crown.

Sixteenth-century Germans, Frenchmen and Englishmen seem to have been less concerned about possible religious meanings of such bodily marks, probably because they did not share the same vested interests in converting the natives they encountered. In German, French and English writing, the tattooed native is usually not vilified as a pagan, but as a 'barbarian'. The text accompanying the German woodprint of the tattooed Inuit woman and her child reprinted above (Fig. 56), for instance, explains the meaning of the mother's facial marks as follows:

The marks in her face are as blue as the sky, and they are bestowed on women when husbands take them as their wives. By these marks, the husbands recognise their wives, for else they would mingle like cattle. One cannot delete these signs on the next day, and they are made with the juice of a particular plant which grows in that country.[17]

Whereas this anonymous denunciation of the 'cattle-like' Inuit primarily dwells on these people's alleged 'beast-like' lust, other sources emphasise the supposedly 'diseased' quality of tattoos. In 1653, Francois-J. Bressani, a Jesuit missionary to Eastern Canada, writes the following:

When this operation [of tattooing] is performed over the entire body it is dangerous, especially in cold weather. Many have died after the operation, either as the result of a kind of spasm that it produces, or for other reasons. The natives thus die as martyrs to vanity because of this bizarre custom. (Gilbert 2000:89)

Bressani's exaggerated fears of certain "spasms" triggered by tattooing fits seamlessly into a textual legacy describing such practices as mad and meaningless. A case in point is the French explorer Gabriel Sagard-Thêodat, who in 1615 dismisses tattooing as "a most strange and conspicuous folly" (Gilbert 2000:89), or in other words, as a custom prevailing with 'fools' who on account of their insanity turn Western norms and values upside down.

A similar condemnation of indigenous practices of tattooing and body painting is reflected in English sources, such as John Pory's translation of Leo Africanus, a text which (as pointed out earlier) ought to be considered Western rather than (North) African in perspective due to the many editorial changes it went through before appearing in the English tongue. According to Pory, Leo says the following about Arabian and North African women:

Their damsels [of Arabia] which are unmarried doe usually paint their faces, brests, armes, hands, and fingers with a kinde of counterfeit colour: which is accounted a most decent custome among them. […] The women of Barbarie use not this fond kind of painting, but contenting themselves only with their naturall hiew[;] they regarde not such fained ornaments: howebeit sometimes they will temper a certaine colour with hens-dung and safron, wherewithall they paint a little round spot on the bals of their cheeks, about the bredth of a French crowne. […] Howbeit they will not use these fantasticall ornaments above two or three daies together: all which time they will not be seene to and of their friends, except it be to their husbands and children: *for these paintings seeme to bee great allurements unto lust, whereby the said women thinke themselves more trim and beautiful*. (1600:1.25, emphasis added)

The ways in which Pory's Leo describes the painting of 'little round spots' by unmarried 'Arabian damsels' and by 'women of Barbary' is strongly reminiscent of the Western interpretation of spots as emblems of the forbidden fruit. The spotted women of 'Barbary' are seen as deliberately corrupting their men by generating an unnatural, self-destructive hankering after sinful love, which is precisely what the illustrations of spotted feminised snakes in Western art keep alluding to. Pory's Arabian and North African women, then, are fashioned into lustful exotic bodies, whose spots are cited as evidence for the accuracy of a cultural code which obscures the true meaning contained in these intricate patterns.

The same interpretation of physical ornaments as signs of bestiality, disease and lust prevails in texts documenting the English colonialisation of the New World. Already the first English account

[17] The original reads: "Die Malzeichen die sie im angesicht hat / seindt ganz blauw wie Himmelblauw / und die machen sie ir / ire mann wenn sie sie zum weib nemmen / dabey erkennen sie i[h]re Weiber denn sonst lauffen sie untereinander wie das Vi[e]he und mann mag die Zeichen nit keinerley moren wider abthun und diese Zeichen machen sie mit safft von einerley Kraut, dass da im lande wechst" (Gilbert 2000:174, translation mine).

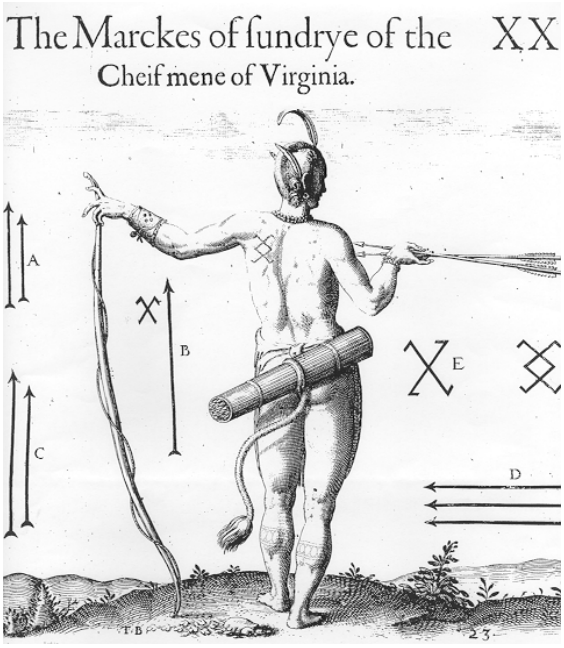
of an expedition to Virginia in 1602, written by Gabriel Archer (1602), draws attention to the ways in which an Indian "had his face over painted and his head stucke with feathers in manner of a Turkey *Cock*[']*s* traine" (Quinn and Quinn 1983:122, emphasis added). Also later texts, such as John Smith's *Map of Virginia* (1612), subsequently reprinted in his *Generall History of Virginia* (1623), record how many Native Americans living near Jamestown "have their legs, hands, brests and face *cunningly* imbrodered with diverse workes, as beasts, serpentes, artificially wrought into their flesh with blacke spots" (Smith 1612:20, Barbour 1986:1.161; 2.115, emphasis added). The sexual innuendo which Gabriel Archer and John Smith only subtly hint at becomes far more explicit if one analyses the iconography in some of the illustrations of Native Americans from the self-same period. These images are principally by two artists, by John White, an English artist and cartographer who accompanied Walter Ralegh on an expedition to establish a settlement on Roanoke Island (Virginia) in 1585, and by the Frenchman Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues, who partook in an earlier expedition by French Huguenots erecting a settlement in Florida in the 1560s. How White's and Le Moyne's illustrations continue this tradition of codifying the tattooed native as the 'barbarian' will be elucidated below.

***

John White, about whose life little is known, was an accomplished illustrator making valuable drawings, now in the British Museum, of the natives and the flora and fauna of Virginia in the 1580s.[18] In 1590 some of his drawings were reprinted by the Flemish printer Theodor de Bry (1590b), who published them in one volume together with a reprint of Thomas Hariot's *Briefe and True report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (1588).[19] De Bry's collection comprises 23 commented illustrations of the physiques, attire and customs of the Secotas, Pomeioc and other local tribes. Five of them document how these natives, and their women in particular, "pounce their foreheads, cheeckes, armes and legs" (De Bry 1590a:Fig. VI).[20] The predominant shape these tattoos assume are thin zig-zag lines, or small circles running horizontally around arms and calves. These tattoos seem to have been worn mostly by women (Fig. 44), yet not exclusively so.[21] White also documents another type of tattoo customarily worn on the back by "sundrye of the Chief mene of Virginia" (Fig. 9). These

[18] White's originals are reprinted in Hulton (1984).
[19] Notice that calling Thomas Hariot the 'editor' of this publication, as the STC catalogue does, is inaccurate. The driving force behind the publication was Theodor de Bry, who printed the work as the first of a series of four volumes with illustrations of the New World. John White's illustrations were first printed in De Bry's Latin edition (referred to as *De Bry 1590a* in this study), and only afterwards in English (referred to as *De Bry 1590b*). A stimulating read of Hariot's description of the native's religious beliefs against the backdrop of an early modern colonial context is offered by Stephen Greenblatt in his article "Invisible bullets" (1985).
[20] The quote is taken from illustration VI of "[a] younge gentill woeman doughter of Secota" (De Bry 1590:A4).
[21] See White's illustrations of "[a] younge gentill woeman doughter of Secota" (Fig. VI), of "the chieff Ladyes of Secota" (Fig. IIII), of the "cheiff Ladye of Pomeiooc" (Fig. VIII), of the "danses which they use att their hyghe feastes" (Fig. XVIII), and of "Ther Idol Kiwala" (Fig. XXI).

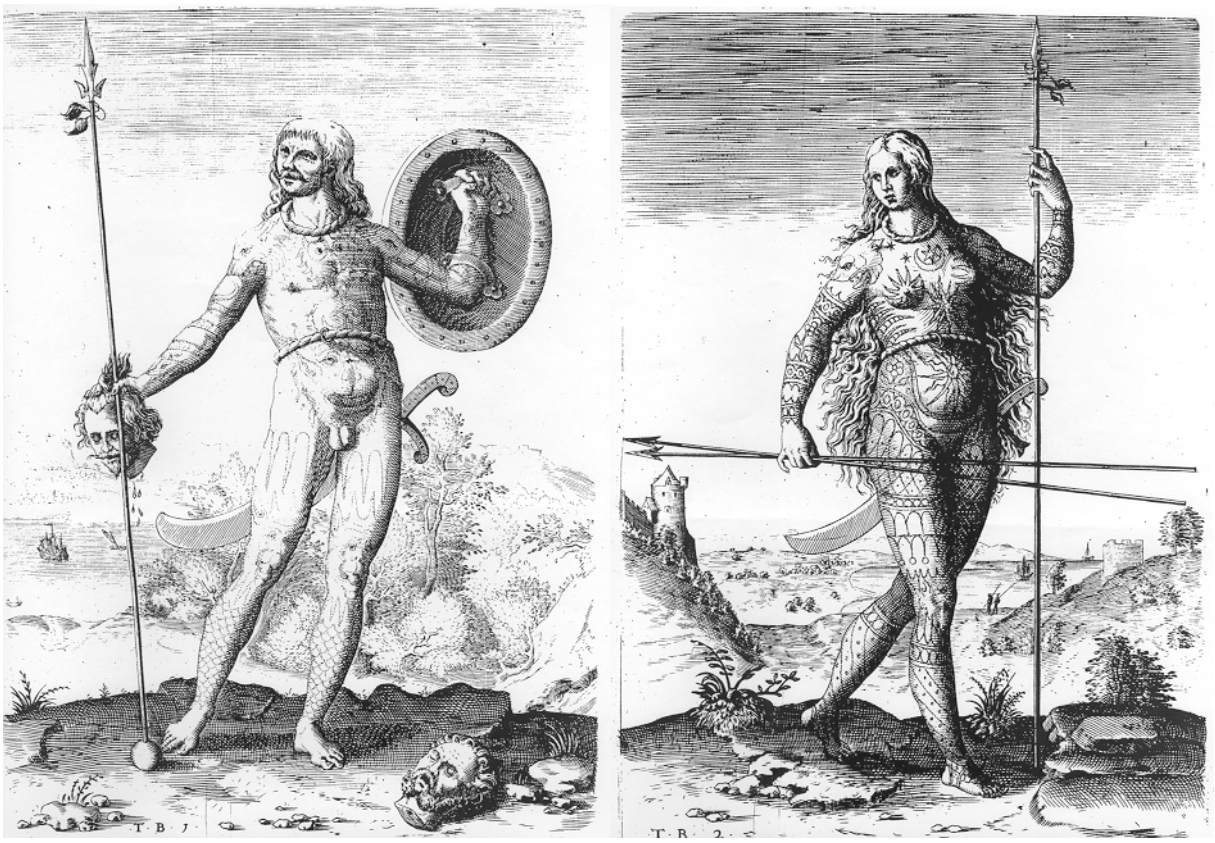
scarifications assume the shape of long arrows and crosses, and seem to have been worn in order to show the bearer's affiliation to a particular tribe (Fig. 45).[22]



Figures 44 and 45: John White. *On[e] [illustration] of the chieff Ladyes of Secota* and *The Marckes of sundrye of the Ch[ie]f me[n] of Virginia* (De Bry 1590a:Figs. IIII, XXIII)

Although the commentary accompanying White's illustrations does not openly say so, there is reason to believe that the wearing of tattoos, of animal tails and feathers (as shown on Fig. 60) would have been rejected as a barbarian 'corruption' and 'deformation' of the human body by a Renaissance public. Such a reading is insinuated by De Bry's unusual decision to enrich the collection of portraits of Native Americans by adding five more engravings showing Britain's oldest 'savage' tribes, the Britons and the Picts. These five illustrations, two of which are reproduced below (Figs. 46-47), may seem rather incongruous with the geographical scope and the theme of the work on Virginia to which they have been appended. Then again, bearing in mind how Renaissance discourse constantly oscillates between past and present, between the exotic continents and Europe, White's illustrations make perfect sense. These images visualise how native customs of body painting, tattooing and scarification are perceived as reminiscent of the traditions among barbaric European nations. This identification of Native Americans with ancient barbaric nations, such as the Picts or Britons, also implies an affinity of the English settlers with classical Rome, or the power these European barbaric tribes used to oppose.[23]

[22] "The inhabitants of all the cuntrie for the most parte have marks rased on their backs, wherby yt may be knowen what Princes subiects they bee, or of what place they have their originall" (Hariot 1590:Fig.XXIII).
[23] See also Stephen Orgel's introduction to *The Tempest*, which documents how John White's imaginary illustrations of Picts reproduces an iconography of cannibalism regularly found in illustrations of American natives (1987:33-36).



Figures 46 and 47: John White. *The true picture of one Picte* and *The true picture of a women Picte* (De Bry 1590a:n.p.)

Even if the European aversion to tattooing and scarification seems to have principally emanated from the Judeo-Christian tradition, as pointed out earlier, Greeks and Romans also tended to regard physical markings of the human body as a barbarian custom. According to Plutarch, tattooing is a custom practised by Thracian women commemorating the murder of Orpheus (Scutt and Gotch 1986:25), and most Roman sources identify it as a custom practised by northern barbarous tribes. Herod of Antioch in the 3th century AD, for instance, writes: "The Britons incise on their bodies coloured pictures of animals, of which they are very proud" (Scutt and Gotch 1986:26), and Claudius Claudianus, court poet to the late Roman ruler Flavius Stilicho, famously describes in *De bello Gothico* (c402 AD) how the Roman troops fought against 'savage Scots' and 'tattooed Picts'.[24] Regardless of how widespread these customs actually were, late Roman and early Christian historiographers turned the concept of the tattooed, savage Pict into a widespread topos. Isidore of Seville consolidated such an association by deriving the name *Pict* from their custom of decorating their bodies with *pictures*:

[24] See Claudius Claudianus' praise for "the legion that had been left to guard Britain, the legion that kept the fierce Scots in check, whose men had scanned the strange devices tattooed on the faces of the dying Picts" (Platnauer 1972:416-18).

The people of the Picts derive their name from the appearance of their bodies, which are marked with various designs pricked with iron needles and coloured with the juice of a native plant; so that they bear the resultant marks according to their personal rank of the individual, their painted limbs being tattooed to show their high birth. (Lindsay 1911:19.23.7, translation mine).

According to Isidore, both the Picts and the Scots, who are described in virtually identical terms,[25] distinguish themselves by perusing their bodies for de*pictions* of a social text which 'civilised' nations express in writing, in dress codes or in the display of other insignia of power. Their custom of ornating the body, in other words, is seen as an attempt to compensate for an obvious lack of cultural sophistication.

This Greco-Roman understanding of tattoos as the mark of the Northern barbarian was still widely known in Renaissance England,[26] and it is also alluded to by John Smith in his imaginary illustrations of the Picts. This is clearly borne out by the references to classical literature in the Latin translation of De Bry's work, which appeared in the same year (De Bry 1590b:F3). Among the classical quotes cited in the Latin edition we find the famous passage in which Julius Caesar describes the painted Celts inhabiting the British Isles:

All the Britons, indeed, dye themselves with woad [i.e. a plant], *which produces a blue colour, and makes their appearance in battle more terrible*. They wear long hair, and shave every part of the body save the head and the upper lip. Groups of ten or twelve men have wives together in common, and particularly brothers along with brothers, and fathers with sons[.] (Edwards 1963: 5.14, emphasis added).

With Caesar, the deliberate colouring of the Britons appears to be merely one character trait distinguishing them from the Romans, another one being their acceptance of polygamy and incest. Caesar's description of the 'blue' Britons seems to have exerted a long-lasting influence on subsequent descriptions of England's earliest known inhabitants in classical and medieval writing, and John White's watercolour originals show Picts and Britons dyed blue from head to toe (Hulton 1984:Plates 65-69). Interestingly, this blue quality situates the ancient Briton in the vicinity of the medieval 'blueman', a stereotype which until the 16th century was used to refer to Saracens, Orientals and Africans (Appendix 1, "blueman"). And in fact, this parallel between 'blue' Britons and dark-coloured non-Europeans is also drawn in one classical authoritative text, namely in Pliny's *Natural History*:

[A]mong barbarian tribes the women stain the face, using, some one plant and some another; and the men too among the Daci and the Sarmatae tattoo [literally 'inscribe'] their own bodies. In Gaul there is a plant like the plantain, called glastum [i.e. woad]; with it the wives of the Britons, and their daughters-in-law, stain all the body, and at certain religious ceremonies march along naked, *with a colour resembling of Ethiopians*. (Page 1956-63:22.2.2, emphasis added)

According to Pliny, painting the body effectively renders these Britons synonymous with exotic African bodies. Pliny's argument, and the fact that Pliny is explicitly mentioned as one of White's sources in Theodor de Bry's Latin edition (De Bry 1590a:E6), closes the circle of John White's juxtaposition of ancient Britons with non-European 'savages'.

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[25] Virtually the same definition of 'painted men' is given to the Scots in book 9: "The Scots have a name derived from their own language which signifies 'painted bodies', because they tattoo themselves with the help of iron pricks and a black juice, and mark themselves with diverse images" (Lindsay 1911:9.2.103, translation based on the French translation of Isidore' by Reydellet 1984:100).

[26] See for instance William Camden, who in his *Britannia* (1586) drew attention to the fact that both Scots and Picts practised a "staining and colouring of their whole bodies" (Fleming 2000:69).

There is no question, then, that the savagery characterising White's Britons is meant to be read as a commentary on non-Europeans bearing similar physical marks. The female Pict's warrior-like masculinity and her unbridled lust, symbolised by the star-like tattoos directing the gaze to her breasts and her navel, present her as the antithesis of female chastity. Furthermore, the male Pict embodies a 'barbarism' and brutality which is not only encoded in the tattoos of fierce animals on his knees and chest, but also in the manner he poses with the lopped-off head of an opponent whose neatly-trimmed beard and moustache resemble an Elizabethan gentleman's. In the original watercolour painting (Hulton 1984:Plate 65), the severed-head is not blue like the Pict's skin, but plain white, which once more underscores the multiple dichotomies of Briton/Roman, non-European/European, tattooed/pure alluded to here. By comparing Native Americans to barbarous Celts, White also constructs an analogy between a European past and a colonial present which has frequently been commented on in postcolonial criticism. Such a comparison often serves the purpose of defining the native as static, backward, and inferior to the European norm. Non-European cultures are likened to the 'dark ages' which the Renaissance despises as 'barbarian' and 'uncultivated'. By insinuating that time has stood still in these territories, such discourse effectively denies foreign nations the right to a history of their own.

This concept of the painted or tattooed non-European seems to have been widely disseminated in Renaissance culture, partly due to the popularity of De Bry's publication, which appeared in at least 17 editions in four languages (English, Latin, French and German) between 1590 and 1620 (Lorant 1946:182). The influence of White's drawings is also attested to by the fact that it remained the standard template for subsequent illustrations of Native Americans in many parts of Europe.[27] Another vehicle disseminating the same stereotype of 'painted' Indians was the second volume published by the same editor Theodor de Bry, which contained a similar collection of illustrations by the Frenchman Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues. Le Moyne had been among the French Huguenots who attempted to establish a settlement in Florida in the 1560s, and he belonged to the lucky few who managed to escape on a vessel when the Spanish attacked Fort Caroline in 1564. On his return, he accidentally hit Swansea Bay instead of La Rochelle, decided to travel to London, and became a servant of Walter Ralegh (Lorant 1946:30). Based on his experiences, he wrote a lengthy narrative and made a series of paintings, both of which were sold after his death by his widow to Theodor de Bry in 1588, who published them in his second volume of documents on the New World (de Bry 1590b) (Lorant 1946:30-31, 280).[28]

[27] As the editor of De Bry's first and second volumes points out, "for three centuries [John White's drawings] remained the main source of pictorial representation of the American Indians. They were copied and recopied, plagiarised, mutiliated, reinterpreted, and redrawn" (Lorant 1946:182).

[28] Notice that most of Le Moyne's original paintings have been lost. The only original corresponding to an engraving by De Bry is the one illustrating a group of Frenchman observing the Florida natives worshipping their deities (Lorant 1946:32).

Like John White's paintings, Le Moyne's illustrations also dismiss the native custom of wearing tattoos as barbaric, though in a slightly different way. The natives of Florida Le Moyne depicts are much more densely covered in tattoos than the Natives of Virginia portrayed by White, and this difference appears both on the few extant originals, as well as on the engravings De Bry had afterwards made.[29] On the engravings done after Le Moyne's death, it is usually only the chiefs, kings and queens whose bodies are tattooed. The engraver may have intended to stress the presence of these patterns as a prerogative enjoyed by the nobility alone. Alternatively, it may have simply been intended to foreground the main protagonists of Le Moyne's narrative more forcefully, or it may quite simply reflect the etcher's unwillingness to repeat the self-same pattern over and over again, especially in scenes where large groups of natives were depicted together. If one compares the numerous etchings on which chief Saturiba appears, one notices a considerable variation with respect to the patterns applied to his body, which suggests that the etchings based on Le Moyne's illustrations must have been realized with a certain degree of artistic licence.

One of Le Moyne's illustrations, entitled *Saturiba goes to war* (Fig. 48), is remarkable for the ways in which it juxtaposes the tattoos of Saturiba (the chief) with conventional Western symbols of the leopard and the lecher. One of the men gazing at Saturiba's summoning to war wears the skin of a leopard as a cape covering his head and back, while the native on the far right, who is partly covered by Saturiba's arm, holds a large quiver covered in leopard fur of an unmistakable phallic shape. From the perspective of the viewer, Saturiba seems to establish contact with both men, obscuring one of them with his tattooed arm, while spilling water, a gesture symbolising the blood of his enemies (as the text explains), towards the leopard-clad warrior. From a semiotic point of view, the spilling of water may also be interpreted as the blessing of the leopard skin and the phallic quiver. Saturiba, in other words, is shown consecrating the insignia of bestiality and of lust, both through the power of his gestures as well as through the ornaments on his own body.

[29] See Le Moyne's two portraits of a male and a female native of Florida reprinted in Hulton (1984:Plates 61-62), which have been reproduced on the title page to this thesis.

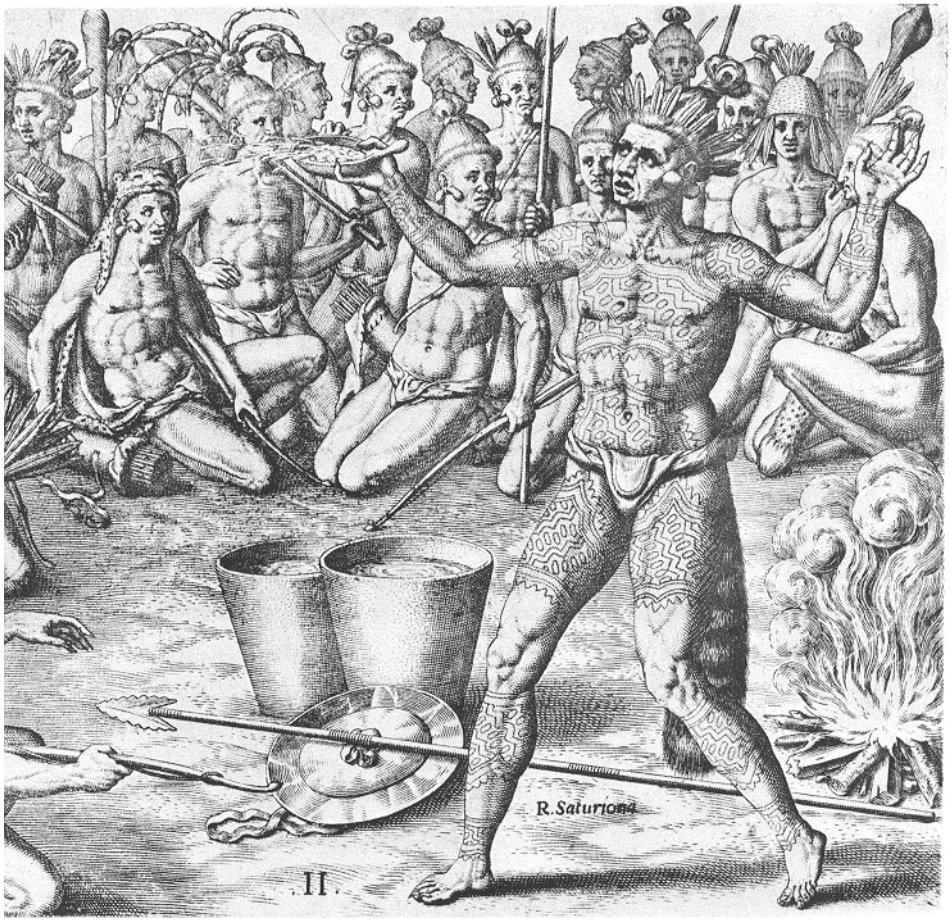

Figure 48. Excerpt from Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues' *Saturiba Goes to War* in his *Brevis narratio eorum quae in Florida Americae* […] (Frankfurt 1591), published posthumously by Theodor de Bry (Lorant 1946:57)

That this illustration is designed to represent these Native Americans as a 'fallen' nation is also confirmed by some other illustrations and their accompanying legends. At one point in Le Moyne's narrative, the inhabitants of Florida are said to feature a high proportion of hemaphrodites, who are compelled to work as labourers and nurses assisting injured warriors and those suffering from contagious diseases (Lorant 1946:69). Another passage claims that the natives of Florida are frequently afflicted by venereal disease (Lorant 1946:75), thereby echoing a conventional pathologising of exotic bodies. Le Moyne's work thus operates with symbols corresponding to the allegorical leopard, leper and lecher which it projects upon the tattooed inhabitants the narrative describes. Le Moyne presents the natives of Florida as a 'fallen' nation who actually welcome the corrupted state in which they abide. Such an interpretation is voiced in one of the last illustrations of Le Moyne's narrative, which shows the Chief Saturiba and his 'Queen' taking an evening walk (Fig. 49).

Figure 49. Excerpt from Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues' *The King and Queen talk a Walk* in his *Brevis narratio eorum quae in Florida Americae* […] (Frankfurt 1591), published posthumously by Theodor de Bry (Lorant 1946:113)

The royal couple, 'dressed' in intricate tattoos, are accompanied by a train of attendants carrying Saturiba's particoloured royal robe and cooling him with spotted fans. The Queen offers Saturiba an exotic plant which he seems to accept only hesitantly. The Queen's gesture of passing on the plant, together with the snake-like coil of Saturiba's dress, iconographically allude to the representation of the Edenic pair and the serpent in Western depictions of the Fall of Eden. However, what distinguishes this 'exotic fall' from the Mauritshuis Fall analysed in depth earlier is the fact that the spots do not reside in a bestial or devilish creature approaching the pair, but within their very own bodies. In other words, Saturiba and his queen are characterised by yet another, additional Fall distinguishing them from the European 'norm'. Bearing in mind these parallels to the Western iconography of the Fall, it seems clear that the engravings based on Le Moyne's paintings no longer try to unearth the actual significance of this ritual tattooing among Floridians than the engravings of John White's 'barbaric' Pict-like Virginian tribes do. Instead, customs of colouring the body are foregrounded to emphasise the cultural gap separating the European settlers from the native inhabitants, and to highlight the fallen condition of these 'barbaric' nations.

This condemnation of the painted body as an impure (and potentially sinful) body directly feeds into the public displays of tattooed natives in Europe, which is recorded from the late 17th

Dampier had bought Jeoly, an adolescent Meangian enslaved by some neighbouring Malay, together with another seaman, and brought him to London, expecting "no small Advantage to my self from my painted Prince […] by shewing him in England" (Gray 1927:366). However, finding himself in financial difficulties upon his arrival in London, Dampier decided to sell his "share" in the "painted prince". Having attracted the interest of "eminent Persons" on arriving on shore, Jeoly quickly became a popular attraction in London, and was circulated among various showhouses until he died of the small pox in Oxford shortly afterwards.[31] Even though the exact circumstances of Jeoly's life in England remain obscure, the marketing of his body remains well-documented in text and image. The public display of Jeoly was combined with selling memorabilia, including a fictitious account of his and his sister's life on their native Pacific island (Hyde 1692), and an illustrated pamphlet depicting the 'Prince' in an imaginary tropical landscape (Fig. 50).

The engraving presents Jeoly dressed only in a striped loincloth which perfectly blends in with the tattooed patterns on his body. Occupying the centre stage, Jeoly is putting to flight various poisonous creatures (scorpions, centipedes, lizards and snakes) by the power of his mysterious body paint. As the accompanying legend explains, the plant with which Jeoly has been "stained" is allegedly "infallible to preserve hum[a]ne Bodies from [th]e deadly poison or hurt of any venomous Creature whatsoever". This myth of Jeoly's 'immunity' against animal poison was of course part of a scam to market Jeoly's stage appearance more successfully, as was the fabricated biography of his life. As William Dampier points out, Jeoly had never possessed a sister adored by a local Sultan, as the biography falsely claimed,[32] and he had always been "as much afraid of Snakes, Scorpions, or Centapees, as my self" (Gray 1927:346). Despite the legends of his sister's oriental paramours and the favourable presentation of his physique in the illustration above, it appears that Jeoly is represented as a colonial subject conforming with the rhetoric of the spotted analysed earlier. The alleged immunity of Jeoly's 'poisonous' body shows him to be a fallen creature, or a humanoid snake, whose own tattoos or 'stigma' (in the classical sense of the word) serve as a tool for stigmatising his cultural and ethnic background.[33]

It appears, then, that on the broadsheet above, Prince Jeoly is not just represented in a neutral mode, but in a manner which accentuates his 'otherness'. This is precisely in line with the modes of representation we encounter in the public displays of exotic bodies in the following centuries. Late 18th and 19th century showhouses and roadshows in England and America did not simply exhibit 'ordinary'

[31] "But I was no sooner arrived in the Thames, but he [Prince Jeoly] was sent ashore to be seen by some eminent Persons; and I being in want of Money, was prevailed upon to sell first, part of my share in him, and by degrees all of it. After this I heard he was carried about to be shown as a Sight, and that he died of the Small-pox at Oxford" (Gray 1927:366).
[32] Dampier notes: "In the little printed Relation that was made of him [Prince Jeoly] when he was shown for a Sight in England, there was a romantick Story of a beautiful Sister of his a Slave with them at Mindanao; and of the Sultan's failling in Love with her; but these were Stories indeed" (Gray 1927:346).
[33] Compare the 'snake-like' Jeoly to one drawing of a native of the St. Lawrence Valley by Charles Bécart de Granville of Quebec (c.1700), in which a heavily tattooed native is holding a giant, and seemingly paralysed, snake (Gilbert 2000:91).

century onwards. The earliest known case of a native being exhibited solely on account of his tattoos is the famous 'Prince Giolo' or 'Prince Jeoly' (Fig. 50), whom the notorious adventurer and buccaneer William Dampier brought to England from one of his South Sea Voyages in 1691.[30]

Figure 50. Broadsheet advertising the appearance of Prince Jeoly [here spelled *Giolo*] in London in 1692 (Gilbert 2000:28)

[30] On the life of William Dampier, see the very recent, yet occasionally superficial biography by Preston and Preston (2004).

non-Europeans, but principally those possessing physical anomalities which allegedly manifested the 'great gulf' separating the European body from other 'races'. These 'anomalities' were typecast according to the three archetypal metaphors this study has singled out as the ingredients of colonial discourse. They were either presented as exceptionally lustful, as displaying a beast-like character, or as diseased bodies. Perhaps the best-known case was Sarah Bartman or Saartjie Baartman, the so-called 'Hottentot Venus', who was paraded through England and France from 1810 to 1815 with enormous success. Sarah Bartman possessed a large fat deposit on her bottom, also called a 'steatopygic appendix', which was allegedly a symptom of her excessive sexual activity, and proved her to be an incarnation of the 'lecherous African'.[34] Another kind of display involved the staging of Africans suffering from vitiligo, a skin disease causing a gradual loss of pigment. Since vitiligo is especially noticeable with dark-skinned people, vitiligo patients could be mythologised as suffering from an ethnically-related disease, or rather, as undergoing a miraculous 'cure' which freed them from the 'disease' of dark colour (Figs. 51-52). Crucially, in some displays these speckled Africans, advertised as 'leopard men' or as 'human tigers', were shown simultaneously with heavily tattooed individuals (Scutt and Gotch 1986:Fig. 43), and thus contributed to a blurring of cultural norms and pathological conditions which facilitated the stigmatising of the physical and cultural properties of non-European nations.

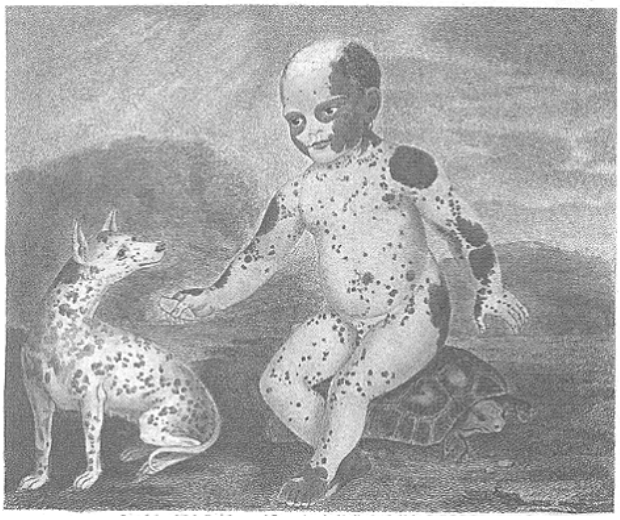

Figure 51. P.R. Cooper. The Portrait of George Alexander (c.1790) (Martin 2002:Fig. 4)

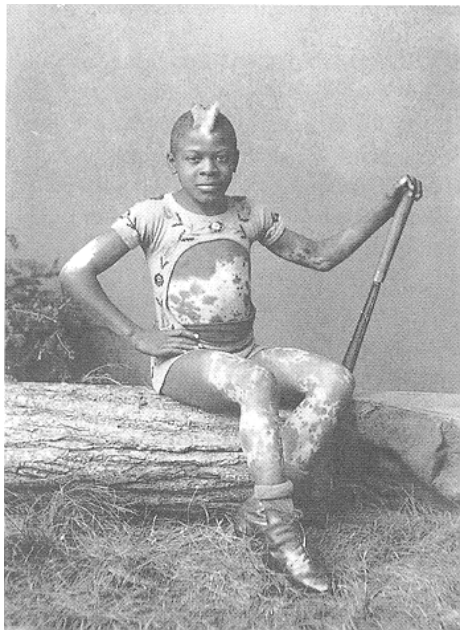

Figure 52. Ashley Benjamin, a 'Leopard Boy' exhibited in Philadelphia and New York in the 1880s (Martin 2002:Fig.9)

[34] For recent discussions of Sarah Bartmann, see Fausto-Sterling (1995), Thomson (1997:70-78), Vlasopolos (2000) and Mitter (2000). Sarah Bartmann was actually no Hottentot but a member of another South African tribe, yet she was named *Hottentot* according to the general practice starting in the 17th century of using the name of "the southernmost society in Africa […] to represent, literally and figuratively, the exact opposite of English society and its preferred values for itself" (Merians 1998:123).

Even though the examples of 'Prince Jeoly' and of 18th and 19th century 'leopard boys' must not be misused as evidence for establishing the modes of representation in the Renaissance period, drawing such parallels seems instructive and justified, especially since the English Renaissance did in fact know a culture akin to the showhouse displays described above. The construction of symbols of the spotted as a discourse of monstrous 'otherness' seems to have gone hand in hand with the 'making' of monsters, or, in other words, with the forceful displacement of natives from their homeland to Europe or to European colonies for the purpose of capitalising on the curiosity of the Western public. In his study on the exhibition of 'human oddities' in early modern England, Paul Semonin (1996) notes that "[f]oreign visitors to England declared the wide appeal of these exhibits [of human 'monsters'] to be one of the characteristic traits of the English people" (1996:70). 'Monstrous' creatures did not only capture the interests of philosophers (Montaigne), scientists (Francis Bacon) or theologians seeing in them mysterious manifestations of God's will.[35] Rather, "in the popular tradition monsters were [also] actors in a drama" (Semonin 1996:78), in performances run by "monster-mongers" of various sorts (*OED* "monster", n. II.8b). It is questionable whether these early modern displays were also intended to 'prove' the difference separating human 'races', as many 19th century exhibitions did (Martin 2002:passim). Then again, as the analysis of the illustration by John White and by Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues and the portrait of 'Prince Jeoly' have shown, there is evidence of a wilful misrepresentation of the exotic body as 'barbarous' and 'monstrous' which may very well have been parallelled and complemented by a trade in live human exhibits.

To reiterate the main points raised in this chapter so far, early modern colonial discourse often deliberately exploits cultural difference in order to cement a strict differentiation between the European and the native, and attempts to vilify the indigenous as a 'fallen' creature by misinterpreting unknown foreign cultural codes as manifestations of a corrupted society. Seeing how Europeans systematically misinterpret tattooing in non-European cultures, it is tempting to speculate on whether individuals and groups 'othered' as spotted leopards, lepers or lechers would have thoroughly grasped the semiotic code underlying the Western rhetoric levelled at them. If one intends to approach this question on the basis of non-European texts, one faces a shortage of written source material for arriving at a satisfactory answer.[36] However, if one broadens the scope of enquiry and looks ahead towards the late 18th century, when Africans based in England and in the Americas first begin to publish, one can see certain tendencies which allow one to formulate a cautious (albeit potentially anachronistic) hypothesis on the reception of the symbolism of the spotted.

[35] On the 'Baconian programme' to make the study of "all monsters and prodigious births of nature" a main pillar of a new experimental science, see Park and Daston (1981:20, 43-47). On the reading of "monstrous births as portents or divine signs", a tradition strongly influenced by Cicero, Augustine and Isidore of Seville, see also Park and Daston (1981:23, 25-35). Augustine's moderate views on monsters have also been analysed by Mary B. Campbell in *The Witness and the Other World* (1988:77-78).

[36] A slightly dated survey of the first African writers publishing in Europe is included in Sandiford (1988:28-36).

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There is reason to believe that many non-Europeans 'discovered' by Renaissance explorers would have been greatly puzzled when faced with a discourse othering them as 'spotted creatures', not only because their societies used physical markings as a mode of self-identification, but also because they sometimes worshipped the animals condemned as 'unnatural hybrids' in the Western tradition. The Western allegorisation of the leopard as an evil beast, for example, directly clashes with the veneration of the self-same animal with the Dorze, an indigenous group based in the Rift Valley in present-day Ethiopia. As the anthropologist Dan Sperber documents, the Dorze have worshipped the leopard for many centuries, and also continued to do so after their Christianisation by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the 15th century. The transition from paganism to Christianity does not seem to have lessened the Dorze's self-identification with the beast, but merely sparked the belief that the leopard was a 'Christian' animal. Interestingly, the Dorze do not seem to attach any particular meaning to the leopard's spots; instead, they judge the animal entirely by its behaviour. The leopard is primarily worshipped because it emulates the behaviour of a noble hunter. By way of contrast, the hyena, which – paradoxically – does far less damage to the Dorze's herds, is despised as an eater of carrion, and serves as a metaphor for 'othering' neighbouring tribes (Sperber 1975:129-39). With the Dorze, then, the leopard is praised for the self-same qualities which medieval and early modern allegory constantly denies it: wholeness, integrity, nobleness, spirituality, and incorruptible virtue. For the Dorze, being called 'a leopard' amounts to a compliment in every sense of the word. From a Dorze perspective, then, Jeremiah's "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" would carry positive, self-referential undertones, and strengthen their self-identification with the Ethiopian state and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.[37]

A similar acceptance of the leopard as a perfectly natural animal resurfaces in 18th century African-American discourse, for example with Ottobah Cugoano, one of the most outspoken critics of the slave trade at the time. Cugoano's *Thoughts and Sentiments* (1787) spearheads the demythologising of Western symbols of the spotted in various ways. His primary concern is to debunk the myth of Noah's curse as a misinterpretation of the scriptures. Having painstakingly shown how Noah's cursing of 'African' Ham constitutes a falsification of biblical text (Carretta 1999:29-34), Cugoano challenges a whole range of pretexts voiced to vindicate the enslavement of Africans. Cugoano also challenges the widespread defamation of Africans as lustful leopards. First, Cugoano harks back to Augustine's point that the state of sinfulness many Western writers associate with black and spotted surfaces resides in humanity as a whole: "[A]ll men are[,] like Ethiopians[,] [...] in a state of nature and unregeneracy[;] they are black with original sin, and spotted with actual transgression,

[37] This rudimentary assessment of Dorze thought, which is solely based on the (somewhat dated) study by Sperber (1975), awaits confirmation in several respects.

which they cannot reverse" (Carretta 1999:129-30).[38] On further reflection, though, Cugoano rejects the very concept of Christian colour symbolism. "[T]he difference of colour and complexion, which it hath pleased God to appoint among men", he asserts, "are no more unbecoming unto either of them, than the different shades of the rainbow are unseemly to the whole" (Carretta 1999:130). Relativising the importance attached to outward appearances, Cugoano insists that "the external blackness of the Ethiopians [...] is as innocent and natural [...] as spots in the leopards" (Carretta 1999:130).

Cugoano and African contemporaries of his such as Ignatius Sancho were obviously equipped with the necessary education to uproot the defamatory texts which had been levelled especially at Africans for centuries. Up until the late 18th century, though, very few Africans would have shared Cugoano's privileged position, and they would have certainly had no opportunity to voice their opposition in print. That under such circumstances deciphering the symbolism of the spotted would have been difficult may be surmised from a fleeting comment dropped by another 18th century African author called Prince Hall on the occasion of inaugurating a new 'African lodge'[39] in Boston in 1797. Overjoyed that the slave trade is about to be abolished in some parts of the Caribbean, he exclaims:

> [I]t now begins to dawn in some of the West-India islands; which puts me in mind of *a nation* (*that I have somewhere read of*) *called Ethiopeans*, *that cannot change their skin*: But God can and will change their conditions, and their hearts too. (Porter 1971:71, emphasis added)

Ostensibly unaware of the fact that the 'Ethiopians' referred to in Western discourse are not an actual 'nation', but a mere stereotype conveniently projected upon a variety of marginal ethnic and social groups, Prince Hall approaches the symbolism of the spotted with the puzzlement of the uninitiated. Uncertain as to where 'this nation' of wicked Ethiopians is to be located, Prince Hall lacks the necessary familiarity with a Western cultural code to see through the constructedness of colonial discourse.

As these examples of the Ethiopian Dorze, of Cugoano, and of Prince Hall suggest, the symbolism of the spotted often assumes the form of a secret code which can only be broken by those familiar with Western cultural norms. This encrypted status is of paramount importance, for it ensures that those situated outside the cultural norm will automatically be excluded from grasping the processes of 'othering' they are being subjected to. What is more, without a solid understanding of the Western symbols of the spotted, non-Europeans will find it difficult to oppose the defamation levelled at them. As a code shared only among those who are properly enculturated, the Western reading of spotted patterns is truly 'secret' in its etymological sense, that is, it 'segregates' or 'divides off' cultures and societies (*OED* "secret", n. and adj.). Another major factor which makes the symbolism of the spotted so influential is its wide dissemination in society. As has been documented in the previous chapters, the symbols of the spotted build on more fundamental Western concepts of purity

[38] Cugoano here paraphrases Augustine's comment on Psalm 73, according to which "all nations are Ethiopians, black in their natural sinfulness; but they may become white in the knowledge of the Lord" (Hunter 1985:196).
[39] Apparently a fraternal organisation with links to the Methodist Church.

and hybridity, which makes them (from a Western point of view) virtually self-explanatory. If one agrees that the crucial factors determining the continuity of ethnic bias are the processes by which such ideas are disseminated and absorbed, this should also have implications for the methodology and the critical approach one adopts for studying the making of cultural and ethnic bias in colonial discourse.

In the past, most studies have tended to ignore aspects of assimilation, and have instead endeavoured to analyse the phenomenon of colour prejudice by historicising the roots of 'racist' thought. That American racism is rooted in anglophone colour prejudice has remained the predominant view since Winthrop Jordan (1968), and it is also one of the assumptions underpinning this study. However, many researchers have continually pushed this line of enquiry even further, tracing the origin of English colour bias back to Iberian colonialism (Sweet 1997), to medieval peasant servitude on the Iberian peninsula (Saunders 1982, Freedman 1991), to Islamic culture (Cohen 1980:2-3), to forms of slavery on the African continent (Meillassoux 1989), and even to slavery in classical antiquity (Phillips 1985, Blackburn 1997b). Obviously, such origin debates are problematic in several respects. To begin with, the assumption that an ideology may be safely boiled down to one particular 'root' often turns out to be illusory. Roots rarely advertise themselves as such, and since so-called 'roots' often amalgamate even older ideas, source hunting runs the risk of turning into an odyssey without any clearly defined aim (Blackburn 1997a:33, 84n.1). Moreover, such a line of enquiry is problematic in the sense that it steadily moves away from the starting point, or the primary concern of the enquiry. What seems particularly worrying for an origin debate on colour bias is the fact that some studies tend to treat ethnic and cultural bias as if it were a typically 'foreign' influence mainly festering elsewhere, thereby mimicking the very 'logic' underlying a discourse of othering itself. As Jonathan Schorsch bluntly states, "the goal often seems to be to name the enemy" (2004:1), and this tendency comes clearly to the fore in a number of studies partaking in a ritual of 'passing the buck', which is counterproductive to understanding the forces generating cultural bias.[40]

A viable alternative to a regressive historiography of 'race', this study argues, is a reading of colour prejudice as a form of cultural dissemination, or as a kind of 'learning process'. A valuable starting point for understanding the teaching and learning of colour bias offers the concept of 'enculturation', which researchers of learning processes have developed on the basis of the anthropological concept of 'acculturation'.[41] Whereas 'acculturation' is generally understood as the dissemination of norms and values across cultural divides (Herskovits 1958:passim), 'enculturation' stands for the absorption of such knowledge while being immersed within one particular culture.

[40] In this context, I am personally reminded of a card game known as "Black Peter", now ousted as politically incorrect, in which the last player to hold Peter's card lost the round. On the dissemination of this game in Dutch culture, see Blakeley (1987:74-77).

[41] On the origin of the concept of 'acculturation' in anthropology, see the classic study by Melville Jean Herskovits, entitled *Acculturation: The study of culture contact* (1938, 1958).

Acculturation is thus centrally concerned with integrating new individuals within a new culture, whereas enculturation encompasses all processes of human learning, such as the knowledge of contents, skills, symbols and norms which are necessary for successfully interacting within a particular society.[42] Even though enculturation is primarily taught by institutions run for this purpose (such as schools), similar learning processes also occur more unobtrusively. On a sociological level, enculturation includes the learning, transformation and absorption of new elements in one's personal identity and in one's group identity. On the basis of these processes, one may distinguish between open and closed societies, i.e. between societies inviting their members to participate actively in the continuous reshaping of their culture, and societies fencing off any foreign influence by establishing 'objective' hierarchies and values and thereby fostering ethnocentrism (Kron 1988:41-44). Regardless of what kind of society one is embedded in, enculturation must be regarded as a constant, unstoppable process. If one agrees with Paul Watzlawick that members of a society cannot choose *not* to communicate (since even a refusal to communicate represents a communicative signal in itself (Watzlawick et al. 1985:72-75)), this means that assuming a neutral stance with regard to cultural norms represents an impossibility.

One cultural norm frequently disseminated in Renaissance England is obviously the concept of colour bias, and it is the degree to which this norm is embraced or rejected, tacitly acknowledged or grudgingly complied with, which determines its impact on society. In the anglophone tradition, we are dealing with what Audrey Smedley calls a "folk concept" of colour prejudice, which she defines as "a product of popular beliefs about human differences [...] evolv[ing] from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries", which reflects the "selective perceptions that constitute a society's popular imagery and interpretations of the world" (1993:25). As Smedley rightly points out, early modern colour bias is a sentiment which is difficult to define since it does not evolve from one epicentre, but pervades most strata of Elizabethan and Jacobean society. Even though the English crown certainly had a share in reaping profits from England's colonial enterprises, none of the regents from Queen Elizabeth I to Charles I seems to have taken an active lead in promoting England's participation in the 'Black Atlantic' economy (Blackburn 1997a:224). England's social and political elite certainly authorised the colonialising of the Western hemisphere, as emerges from fact that in 1604 as well as in 1614 "no fewer than a third of all Members of the House of Commons were involved in colonial projects of one sort or another" (Blackburn 1997a:220). However, given the relative scarcity of historical records for the crucial time period between the 1550s (when English-African relations intensified) and the 1660s (when laws stipulating the systemic enslavement of Africans in the Americas were codified), reconstructing the government's role in the making of colour bias remains a task fraught with major difficulties. Nevertheless, even if there is no easy answer to the origin of

[42] Lloyd A. Thompson uses the term 'acculturation' when describing the phenomenon that Africans seem to have been rather well-accepted in ancient Rome if they were 'acculturated', i.e. showed an appreciation of Roman culture and were sufficiently proficient in Latin (1989:124-29).

English colour prejudice, there are several indications as to how English "pigmentocratic ideology" (Schorsch 2004:296) would have been spread. Probably the two most important channels for such a task were the ones which are also of greatest relevance in everyday life, that is, oral and visual communication.

As has been pointed out in the discussion of the figure of Ham, the myth of Noah's curse seems to have primarily existed as an oral text. The myth appears in so many different textual variants that a linear dissemination from one written text to another seems quite unlikely. Also, it should be borne in mind that the most authoritative sources availabe at the time, the various translations of the Bible, unanimously disprove the myth. The form in which Noah's curse would have performed most successfully, then, is as an oral text, or as mouth to mouth propaganda. In a recent study, Alexandra Walsham (2002) has argued that Protestant Renaissance England did in fact possess an oral tradition of disseminating cultural text which was far more influential than critics and historians have been hitherto inclined to assume.[43] If the reading of the figure of Ham in the previous chapter is accurate, this would corroborate Walsham's conclusion that the dissemination of a certain kind of text, and especially of slander, heavily relied on an orality which can no longer be recovered on the basis of the sources extant today.

A second, equally important medium by which colour prejudice would have been communicated is visuality. This study has documented in detail how Western culture constructs an intricate network of symbols of impurity which is exploited in texts seeking to define the non-European body as physically, mentally and morally stained. Many Renaissance paintings are very successful at communicating this concept of the African as the fallen because they successfully exploit a universally-known iconography canonised since the Middle Ages. The notion of the non-European body as a monstrous, corrupted body, however, is not only conveyed by furnishing it with particular attributes, such as leopard skins or phallic symbols. Rather, it is just as frequently the very staging of the colonial physique which is intended to strengthen the belief in an unbridgeable gulf between different nations, as has been shown with the example of 'Prince Jeoly', the tattooed Polynesian publicly displayed in 17th century England. Such visual performances of non-European bodies were most probably of great importance, for they taught those frequenting these shows to 'see' the physical and cultural divide separating ethnicities with their own eyes. These shows would have also contributed to spreading what Audrey Smedley has called a "primordialist" view of colour prejudice, that is, the belief that colour bias represents a "natural componen[t] of the human psyche", and that "it is basic human nature to be fearful of those who are different from ourselves" (1993:23). Evidence of such a belief can be found for instance in the passage from John Locke's *Essay on Human*

[43] "In conclusion, it is time that historians set aside the lingering assumption that the Reformation dealt a death blow to oral tradition and gave due credit to the ways in which, at least in the short term, it served to revitalize it, though not in an entirely pure or autonomous form" (Walsham 2002:187).

Understanding (1690), in which Locke states that a newborn baby will by nature be afraid of facing a "blackamoor", thereby mythologising colour prejudice as a 'natural' response, and equipping it with an authoritative status.[44]

As numerous studies on human learning processes have confirmed, 'learning' something is often incomparably easier than 'unlearning' it, particularly if the item to be learnt is aggressive behaviour (Steiner 1988:81-100). That this principle is of great relevance to the spreading of colour bias goes without saying. We find indeed some references in colonial discourse which refer to the ways in which prejudice is acquired,[45] whereas texts describing the 'unlearning' of bias seem to be incomparably rarer. One way of assessing the degree to which colour prejudice was disseminated during the Renaissance, then, would be to consider how such a bias could be 'unlearnt', if at all. One may, for instance, survey what kind of printed material there was which would have encouraged the first English settlers in the Americas and Englishmen on the British Isles to renounce and criticise forms of colonial oppression.

The answer to this question is sobering. It seems that in the incipient phase of colonialism, no or very few voices were raised against the enslavement of Africans, and of other ethnic groups. Even though the English were very quick to accuse for example the Spaniards for committing atrocities in their American colonies,[46] virtually no explicit criticisms of the English involvement in colonial enterprises seem to have been published prior to the works by the Quaker George Fox in 1650 (Smedley 1993:209). As Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Vaughan have pointed out in their survey of Elizabethan attitudes towards Africans, "negative literary and visual representations had no significant counterpoint; no corpus of Afrophilic prose or performance balanced the scale" (1997:42). By way of contrast, the period abounded in texts teaching colour prejudice, often at a subconscious level, such as the notorious catchphrase that one "cannot wash the Ethiopian white". Indeed, this proverb reverberated through a wide range of classical and medieval texts, many of which were made accessible again in the Renaissance.[47] It was communicated to a growing readership through Erasmus' *Adagia*, through proverb collections and emblem books, which often served as teaching material at

[44] "The Child certainly knows, that the Nurse that feeds it, is neither the Cat it plays with, *nor the Blackmoor it is afraid of*; That the Wormseed or Mustard it refuses, is not the Apple or Sugar it cries for: this it is certainly and undoubtedly assured of" (Nidditch 1975:1.2.§25, emphasis added). Since John Locke was both an investor in the *Royal African Company* and an active member of the *Board of Trade and Plantations*, Robin Blackburn suggests that Locke should be considered "one of the founders of English colonialism" (1997a:329), yet without discussing Locke's stance towards colonial slavery in any further detail.

[45] See for example Thomas Jefferson, who remarks on the subject of maltreating slaves that "[o]ur children see this, and learn to imitate it; for man is an imitative animal" (Smedley 1993:207). For an example from the early modern period, one may consider Caliban's comments on 'teaching how to curse', as analysed by Stephen Greenblatt in a historic article of 1976.

[46] See e.g. the preface to the anonymous translation of Bartolomé de las Casas' accusation of Spanish crimes in the West Indies (1583).

[47] See Lucian's rhetorical masterpiece *Adversus Indoctum* (Harmon 1960:28), Terence's play *Phormio* (Sargeaunt 1965:186), and the patristic commentaries by Jerome (*Epistles* 69.6.7; 97.2.3; 108.11.1; *Adv. Ruf.* 3.23 (475 A); *Adv. Pelag.* 2.26 (565 B) and by Gregory the Great (*Epistle* 3.67). See also the the popular story collection of the *Gesta Romanorum* (14th c.) (Keller 1841:5).

early modern schools.[48] Other cultural icons teaching the same formula included John Lyly's famous rhetorical masterpiece *Euphues* (1578, Bond 1902:1.191), or Thomas Elyot's *Bibliotheca Eliotae*, one of the first dictionaries of the English language (1542, 1548, 1552:"Aethiopem lavas"). Given this firm embedding of the ominous phrase in widely-known Renaissance authorities, it is not surprising to see so many references to the unchangeable Ethiopian in Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama (see Prager 1987). Even though it appears dangerous to read too much into the dissemination of mere rhetorical figures of speech, the presence of such tropes clearly created an imbalance that may have facilitated the application of further rhetorical and physical abuse. Thus, it would appear that Renaissance discourse catered to the acquisition of a vocabulary of difference projecting negative images at foreign nations, and at somatic 'otherness'.

Then again, what we do find in early modern discourse are texts which surreptitiously challenge the rhetoric analysed earlier. As has been pointed out, the symbolism of the spotted is not a universally accepted dogma, but a text which is also critically received. This tallies with the conviction expressed by so-called new historicists that there is no unified Elizabethan world view, as 'old' historicists such as E.M.W. Tillyard (1943) used to suggest. However, we also find many Renaissance sources expressing confidence in the kind of unity of thought Tillyard proposes, a fact which makes his argument worth reconsidering.

According to Tillyard, Elizabethan thought is monolithic and characterised by a Hegelian 'spirit of the age' which is structured according to universally accepted principles. The governing idea of this spirit is said to consist in universal concepts of order and disorder which are projected onto social and political hierarchies, onto human physiology, gender relations, the animal kingdom and nature as a whole. To Tillyard's credit, it should be pointed out that there are texts which construct the kind of universal analogies Tillyard foregrounds, such as the following passage from Thomas Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique* (1553):

> Al things stande by order, and without order nothing can be. For by an order we are borne, by an order we live, and by an order we make our ende. By an order and urle as head, and other obey as members. By an order Realmest stande, and Lawes take force. Yea, by an order the whole worke of Nature, and the perfite state of all the Elements have their appointed course. (Patrides 1979:190)

Also, one may fruitfully apply Tillyard's conjecture of an Elizabethan aversion to disorder to the study of colonial discourse. Several non-European nations, including Africans and the Irish, are often 'othered' for their apparent lack of an orderly, well-structured society, as Audrey Smedley points out:

> The Gaelic peoples of Ireland shared many of the habits and customs known from studies of nomadic peoples in the Old World. Because they were a herding people […] English culture by contrast was ordered, structured, and controlled. Men were bound in permanent relationships of stratified ranks to one another and to property in land, houses, and commercial enterprises. (Smedley 1993:56)

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[48] See Erasmus' *Adagia* (1500:1.4.50), which borrows the proverb from classical collections such as the *Greek Anthology* (Patton 1963:No.428). These Latin proverbs are later on disseminated into the vernaculars. See Franck's *Sprichwörter* (1541:1.27r, 1.28v, 2.59v), and the English translation of Erasmus by Edward Raban (1622:1.10).

Since the English colonial enterprise very much represents an attempt to impose a new rigorous order on a disorderly, and therefore threatening, environment, there is a sense in which Elizabethan thinking on cross-ethnic interaction is governed by an obsession to implement a Tillyardian set of multiple hierarchies. Then again, even if the metaphor of order and disorder represents the dominant rhetorical trope in extant sources of the time, accepting such rhetoric as the universally held world view fails to do justice to the complexity and versatility of Renaissance discourse in several respects. As the numerous links between the three symbols of the beast, of the diseased and of the sexually deviant have shown, very little effort is needed to accept such rhetoric as fact. By way of contrast, much more effort is required to keep a critical distance to such rhetoric, especially if this rhetoric is supported by a political authority or a socially dominant group. Nevertheless, it seems presumptuous to claim that Elizabethan audiences would have been incapable of opposing such a rhetoric *per se*, especially since we find voices of the period disagreeing with this dominant discourse, which of course makes Tillyard's theory of a unified Elizabethan worldview redundant.

On the basis of their discursive function, we may distinguish between five different ways in which Renaissance texts attempt to challenge symbols of the spotted. These encompass (1) replacing images of the spotted with more favourable images, (2) refuting and (3) parodying symbols of the spotted, (4) welcoming 'extraordinary' bodies in their own right, and (5) radically questioning the reliability of describing 'otherness' from a Eurocentric, or indeed from any narrowly defined perspective. In order to pave the way for close-reading attitudes to the symbolism of the spotted in Shakespearean plays in the last part of this study, the following pages will briefly outline all of these responses in turn.

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A prime example of how unfavourable myths of social 'outcasts' may be superseded by more favourable images is offered by Richard Jobson's *Golden Trade* (1623), probably the most detailed Jacobean account of West Africa. Jobson repeatedly undermines many of the strongly biased stereotypes common in early modern colonial discourse. At one point, Jobson notes that a nation called the "Mary-buckes", who live along the river Gambia, "have a great resemblance to the Rechabites, spoken of in the thirty-five Chaper of the prophet Ieremy" (1623:76). These Rechabites are commended in the scriptures for their modesty, their temperance, their strict observance of Judaic law and for their abstinence from wine, which causes Noah's fall and the cursing of Canaan (Jer 35:1-19). In another passage, Jobson describes his 'hyerling' Bucker-Sano in a language more properly pertaining to Friday, Robinson's perfect servant, than to the disobedient Ham, or to the unteachable Ethiopian. In an elaborate ritual signalling unconditional surrender, Bucker-Sano flings himself to the ground, covers himself in dust from head to foot, eats dust and spits it out. He then throws earth in the

narrator's lap, and finally kneels down while "putting his legge between mine as I sat, which his body seemed to shadow mine, presenting his bowe, and drawing his arrowe up, signifying, that so he would fight, and oppose his body, in defence of mine." (Jobson 1623:98-99). As the repeated references to his 'earthly' status and to the genitals of his 'maker' insinuate, Bucker-Sano willingly accepts his master as a father-figure, whom he is willing to serve without reservation. Even though such a description of perfect filial obedience constitutes a myth obviously designed to strengthen a colonial hierarchy, the affection Jobson's narrator attributes to his 'hyerling' Bucker-Sano endows the native with an emotional capacity which few contemporaries seem to share. A few pages down, Jobson also offers a highly interesting contrast to the common analogy of 'brutish' Irishmen with similarly 'uncultivated' foreign nations.[49] With Jobson, the Irish and West Africans are not both 'brutes', but nations sharing similar kinds of musical and poetic gifts:

> There is, without doubt, no people on the earth more naturally affected to the sound of musicke then these people; which the principall persons do hold as an ornament of their state, so as when wee come to see them, their musicke will seldome be wanting, wherein they have a perfect resemblance to the Irish Rimer sitting in the same maner as they doe upon the ground, somewhat remote from company. (Jobson 1623:105)

Even though texts such as Jobson's counter-narrative are powerful 'antidotes' to the more general trend, the four other kinds of critical response are arguably more effective, since they actively encourage a refutation of the "grammar" (Freedman 1993:87) or the deep structure governing the Western symbolism of the spotted. Prime examples of the second kind of response, that is, a refutation of symbols of the spotted by logical deduction, have been amply discussed in the analysis of the myths of the 'Hamitic' and 'Canaanite' Africans, and do not need to be reiterated at this point. A whole tradition of writers, from Wyclif via Bodin and Purchas up until 18th century African-American authors and beyond, exposes the internal contraditions of such discourse, and specifically points up the incoherence governing the fake genealogical lines.

A third type of response attacking the symbolism of the spotted assumes the form of a parodying by means of a Bakhtinian carnevalesque.[50] Carneval, probably the most popular of Renaissance folk customs, is according to Bakhtin a playful inverting of values in a power vacuum which assumes a dynamics of its own. Carneval is also associated with crossdressing, with hybridity and with particoloured patterns, which often appear on the traditional costumes of fools.[51] In Western art, fools are usually distinguished from the 'norm' by the three archetypal symbols close-read above. They typically wear animal parts (such as ass's ears), are dressed in a "variegated costume, or fool's

[49] On analogies between the Irish and Africans, see the Introduction (page 17) . On analogies between the Irish and Native Americans, see Muldoon (1975).

[50] This corresponds to what Mary Douglas considers the fifth and the only constructive way in which cultures respond towards the extraordinary, as pointed out at the opening of this section.

[51] Notice also that the term *motley*, originally denoting a piece of cloth made from threads of two or more colours, is widely used in the Renaissance as a synonym for the particoloured costumes of jesters and harlequins, and even as a substitute for fools and jesters themselves (*OED* "motley", n. and adj.). In *As You Like It*, the fool Touchstone is constantly referred to as someone wearing motley clothes (2.7.34), "a motley foole" (2.7.17), and as a "motley-minded gentleman" (5.4.40). For a contemporary illustration of a clown in particoloured clothing, see Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *The Battle of Carneval and Lent* (Claessens and Rousseau 1969:Fig.10).

motley, [which] serves as an outward manifestation of his demented and disorganized mind", or are shown naked or with little clothing, thus displaying a propinquity to lust (Roberts 1998:321). Western texts often invoke fools and scenes of the Carnevalesque in order to imagine alternative social realities, and to challenge the repression of non-conformity. One text which inverts the rhetoric of the spotted by such a humorous mode is Rabelais' *Gargantua et Pantagruel* (1562), in which the narrator not only pokes fun at the proverbial white-washing of Ethiopians, but also derives the name of Rabelais' own hometown Chinon from an imaginary root *Caynon*, which allegedly signifies 'the city of Cain'.[52]

Another form of the carnevalesque appears in Plutarch's dialogue "On the cleverness of animals", reprinted in Philemon Holland's translation of the *Moralia* in 1603. In this dialogue, Gryllus, who has been transformed into a pig by Circe, attempts to convince Ulysses that his metamorphosis is by no means a punishment, but has rather elevated him into a preferable condition. The argument Gryllus puts forward is that his change cannot really be interpreted as a worsening of his previous condition, since animals are by nature more noble, more honest, less cruel, and less self-conceited than humans (Holland 1603:564-65). Also, Gryllus adds that animals are far more chaste than humans, and therefore less inclined to consummating unnatural, monstrous unions (Holland 1603:567-68). Since the dialogue breaks off at the very moment when Ulysses begins to counter Gryllus' "strange absurd position" (Holland 1603:570), there is considerable uncertainty as to how Plutarch intended this text to be read. According to Holland, Gryllus possesses the uper hand, and effectively "proov[es] against Ulysses, and that by divers arguments […], that beasts have the start and vantage of men in all these points", that is, in terms of virtue, fortitude, temperance and wisdom (Holland 1603:562). If one follows Holland's reading, the *Cleverness of Animals* would appear as a source challenging the common reading of Circe as a corrupting force, and undermining the whole 'logic' pervading the symbolism of the spotted.[53]

A fourth kind of critical response may be seen in texts which accept extraordinary human shapes in their own right, a tradition reaching back to antiquity. The well-known Pseudo-Aristotelian *Problem* 30,[54] for instance, opens up with the question: "Why is it that all men who are outstanding in philosophy, poetry or the arts are melancholic, and some to such an extent that they are infected by the diseases arising from black bile […]?" (Hett 1937:953a). Convinced that many mythical heroes (like Heracles and Lysander the Spartan) and philosophers (like Plato or Socrates) were melancholics,

[52] On the reference to Chinon, see Borst (1957-63:1125-26). The white-washing of Ethiopians occurs in the fifth volume, which almost certainly was not by Rabelais himself, but which expresses the same kind of Rabelaiesque spirit (Huchon and Moreau 1994:5.21.773).

[53] For a more conventional exploitation of the Circe-myth in the context of travelling and exploration, see Roger Ascham's *The Scholemaster* (1570), in which Venice is likened to a Circe-like city which "Italianate[s]" English visitors, "marre[s] men[']s man[n]ers" and turns them into swine (Hadfield 2001:20-22).

[54] Notice that the 'Aristotelian' *Problemata* are probably not by Aristotle, but by Theophrastus (Flashar 1966:61, Van der Eijk 1990:33). For a carefully annotated French translation of question 30 on melancholy and the genius, see Gravel (1982:135-45).

pseudo-Aristotle portrays the melancholic type not just as the one most susceptible to physical and mental disease, but also as the cradle for fostering an exceptional status. The text, therefore, effectively undermines the core belief underpinning Aristotle's *Physiognomy*, according to which any physical deviation from the male 'norm' must by needs represent a corruption.[55] Even though Renaissance texts frequently lampoon the "old Aphorisme of [pseudo-]Aristotle" (Burton 1621:1.3.3.1.264) (see for instance the character of Jacques in *As You Like It*), there is a tradition of celebrating "great epileptics" in the Renaissance, and of expressing a similar reverence towards the unusual as we find in pseudo-Aristotle.[56] Francis Bacon in his essay "Of Deformity" points out that a 'misshapen' body may in some cases be indicative of, and even conductive towards, breeding a virtuous character:

[T]hey [the 'deformed'] will, […], seek to free themselves from scorn; whch must be either by virtue or malice; and therefore let it not be marvelled if sometimes they prove excellent persons; as was Agesilaus, Zanger the son of Solyman, Æsop, Gasca President of Peru; and Socrates may go likewise amongst them; with others. (Spalding 1861:6.480-81)

Whether or not such an admiration of physical and physiological difference as Bacon and pseudo-Aristotle presuppose also occurs with stage representations of Africans remains to be seen in the following reading of African characters in Shakespearean plays.

A fifth kind of opposition, and probably the most radical of all, is exemplified by some of the essays by Michel Montaigne, who has by some been credited with voicing "anti-racist sentiments" (Kolin 2002:15). In his essay "Of a monstrous child", Montaigne meticulously scrutinises the ways in which Renaissance culture fashions those deviating from the norm into 'monsters'. Having personally witnessed a pair of Siamese twins and a shepherd lacking genitals due to a birth defect, Montaigne strongly rejects the public exposure of these individuals for profit, and reflects on what their unusual bodies may mean. On the one hand, Montaigne believes that the Siamese twins may signal "a favorable prognostication to our King to maintaine the factions and different parties of this our kingdome under a unitie of the lawes" (Florio 1603:2.30.409). On the other hand, he doubts whether these extraordinary humans ought to be attributed any special symbolic value at all, since they have only become 'monsters' or signs within the human imagination. Convinced that the human faculties necessarily run short of grasping the principles by which the universe has been created, Montaigne speculates that originally these humans may not have been intended as 'monstrosities' as all, but rather as a integral part of a far more complex divine order:

Those which we call monsters are not so with God, who in the immensitie of his work seeth the infinite of formes therein contained. […]. And it may be thought, that any figure doth amaze us, hath relation unto some other figure of the same kinde, although unknowne unto man. *From out his all-seeing wisdome proceedeth nothing but good, common, regular, and orderly; but we neither see the sorting, nor conceive the relation.* (Florio 1603:2.30.409)

Given the flawed nature of human reason, Montaigne stresses, 'monsters' may actually be nothing but fallacious constructs fostered by contacts with new and unfamiliar sights. Monstrosity, in other words, lies entirely in the eyes of the beholder:

[55] A somewhat similar attitude towards physical deformity appears with some medieval writers who express the view that the monstrous races inhabiting the rims of the world were neither an accident in the Creation, nor indicative of a failure in God's plan. Rather, they were a part of His creation, and bore a special significance (Friedman 1981:88-89).

[56] See *As You Like It* (2.5) (O'Connell 1986:54). On the tradition of celebrating 'great epileptics', see Temkin (1945:152-59).

That which he often seeth, he doth not wonder at, though he know not why it is done; But if that happen, which he never saw before, he thinkes it some portentous wonder. We call that against nature, which commeth against custome. There is nothing, whatsoever it be, that is not according to h[e]r. Let therefore this universall and naturall reason, chase from us the error, and expell the astonishment, which noveltie breedeth, and strangenes causeth in us. (Florio 1603:2.30.409)

Montaigne's negation of trust in human faculties, and particularly in the faculty of sight , brings him very close to the radical scepticism characterising Cartesian philosophy. If, as Montaigne points out, Renaissance culture "call[s] that against nature which commeth against custome", then the entire discourse on the 'unnaturalness' of foreign hybrids ought to be dismissed as an "error" bred through ignorance, and as a myth obscuring "universall and naturall reason".

The same radical opposing of Eurocentric views also typifies other essays by Montaigne, notably his celebrated "Apologie of Raymond Sebon", which Jacques Derrida discusses in his essay "L'animal que donc je suis (à suivre)" (1999:256-57). As Derrida points out, Montaigne opens up the discourse of his own writing by mocking the 'impudence' with which human beings turn sensory impressions into objective 'facts' and cultural 'knowledge'. By assuming a God-like mastery over (visual) texts, humans reduce those deviating from the 'norm' to inferior creatures devoid of sensibility and reason. This imbalance Montaigne perceives both between humans and animals, as well as across different cultures and ethnic groups:

That defect which hindreth the communication betweene them [animals] and us, why may it not as well be in us as in them? It is a matter of divination to guesse in whom the fault is that we understand not one another. For, we understand them no more than they us. By the same reason, may they as well esteeme us beasts, as we them. It is no great marvell if we understand them not: no more doe we the [C]ornish, the Wel[s]h, or [the] Irish. Yet have some boasted that they understood them, as *Apollonius Thyaneus, Melampus, Tiresias, Thales,* and others. And if it be (as Cosmographers reporte) that there are nations, who receive and admit a Dogge to be their King, it must necessarily follow, that they give a certaine interpretation to his voice and moving. We must note the paritie that is betweene us. We have some meane understanding of their senses, so have beasts of ours, about the same measure. They flatter and faune upon us, they threat and entreate us, so doe we them. (Florio 1603:2.12.260)

As Montaigne clearly states, the analysis of foreign nations is frequently a matter of conjecture, and eclipses the one aspect which Derrida foregrounds in his analysis of the relationships between humans and beasts: the fact that the beast looks back, and 'writes' back (Derrida 1999:279). As Montaigne points out, Western discourse denies "the paritie that is betweene us", and operates with labels marking difference as 'otherness' in order to transform beasts into non-humans, and 'inhuman' humans into beasts. The same principle, Montaigne seems to suggest, applies to descriptions of those ousted from the norm, no matter whether the groups in question are "the Cornish, the Welsh, or [the] Irish" or other ethnic groups.

In view of these critiques offered at different levels, the relation between the symbolism of the spotted and Renaissance discourse emerges in quite a different light than traditional historicists like Tillyard (1943) would have us believe. Symbols of the spotted emerge as powerful rhetorical tools which – although dominating large swathes of early modern discourse – may be challenged, undermined, or superseded by alternative texts. One major difficulty with asserting the subversive potential of such critiques, though, is the fact that criticism may also be tolerated or 'staged' in order

to contain resistance and subversion, as Stephen Greenblatt has shown in his influential study on "Invisible Bullets" (1985). Furthermore, it can be extremely difficult to ascertain whether a particular text appropriates a symbols in order to forward or to question the code of the spotted. A case in point is *The Baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch* by Jan Brueghel the Elder and by Josse de Momper the Younger (1564-1635), reprinted below (Fig. 53).

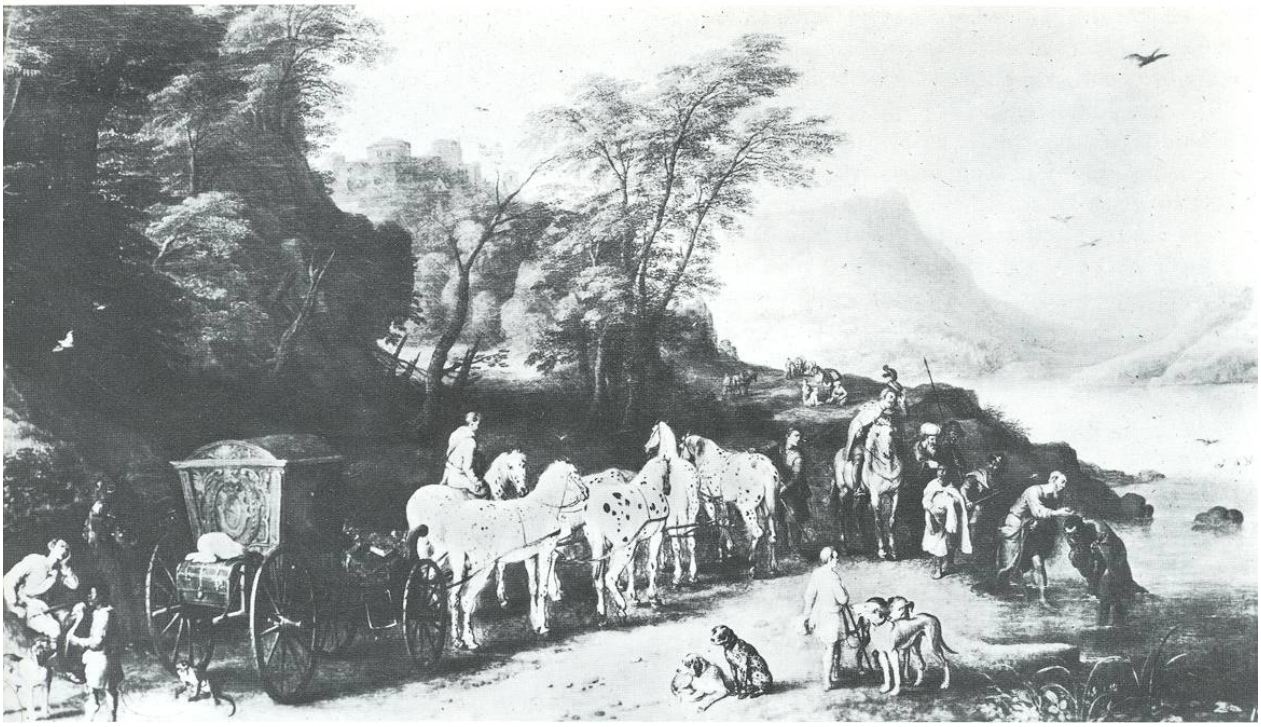

Figure 53. *The Baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch* (c1613-20)
By Jan Brueghel the Elder and Josse de Momper the Younger
Alte Pinakothek Munich, Inv. No. 4672.
(Ertz 1979:Fig. 578)

In many medieval and early modern biblical commentaries, this scene from the Acts of the Apostles (8:27)[57] is understood as an important testimony to the power of the Gospel, since Queen Candace's Ethiopian is the first person after the Apostles whose baptism is recorded in the scriptures. Not surprisingly, this narrative is also often regarded as superseding the condemnation of colour inherent in Jeremiah's "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" (13:23). Bede the Venerable in his *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum* (c.725-31), for example, regards the blessing of the Eunuch as rehabilitating Jeremiah's curse (Laistner 1970:VIII.27), and also the mid-17th century Catholic Richard Crashaw asserts that it is "no longer […] a forlorne hope / To wash an Æthiope: / He's wash't, His gloomy skin a peacefull shade / For white his soule is made".[58] Although Crashaw's highly optimistic conclusion ("I doubt not, the Eternall Dove, / A black-fac'd house will love") runs counter to the majority of Elizabethan and Jacobean texts, it is fundamental to realise that the sources

[57] A convenient compilation of the various translations of Acts 8:27 from Wyclif to the *Authorised Version* is offered by Samuel Bagster's *English Hexapla* (1841).
[58] The quote is from Richard Crashaw's *Steps to the Temple* (1646), "Act 8: On the baptized Aethiopian", his own translation of his Latin *Epigrammata Sacra* (1634) (Martin 1927). Crashaw is also discussed in Hall (1995:114-15).

condemning the 'unwashable Ethiopian' can never completely silence this subtext which reinterprets the symbolism of the discriminating idiom in a diametrically opposed way.[59]

What distinguishes Brueghel's and Momper's version of the baptism of the Eunuch from other visual representations of the same theme, such as Rembrandt's well-known version at the Rijksmuseium in Utrecht (1626) (Blakely 1993:Fig.30, Erickson 2002:Fig.13), are the many particoloured animals in Apostle Phillip's train. Obviously, the painting suggests a link between the baptising of the Ethiopian eunuch on the one hand and Jeremiah's cleansing of the 'spotted' and sinful African on the other, especially since several patches of the Ethiopian's skin glisten brightly in the sun. What the painting fails to clarify, though, is how this juxtaposition of 'blackness' and spottedness is to be read, and particularly how the syntactic sequence of events is to be reconstructed. As Paul Watzlawick points out in his fourth axiom on communication, digital signs (such as paintings) usually lack a clearly-defined syntax, whereas analogous signs (such as recited poems) lack unequivocal semantic meaning (1972:96-103). This inescapable syntactic uncertainty ingrained in the visual arts greatly complicates the interpretation of Momper's and Brueghel's work, for it appears by no means clear whether the spotted creatures should be viewed as representing an original sinful state which is successfully overcome, or whether they signify permanent spots of sin which not even Phillip's baptism may successfully erase.[60] Moreover, there is even a third possibility, namely that Brueghel's and Momper's images of spottedness have been transformed into a positive state of hybridity in which outer 'darkness' is outweighed by inner 'whiteness'. Momper and Brueghel's painting, then, leaves ample room for speculation, as do other paintings of the period which endow positive African role models (e.g. Balthasar of the three Magi) with symbols of hybridity and monstrosity.[61]

The ambiguity characterising the depiction of Momper and Brueghel's Ethiopian Eunuch thus (perhaps inadvertently) illustrates the difficulties involved in both communicating and deciphering a particular visual code. Seen from a global perspective, cultural codes are by no means as unambiguous as the study of Western sources alone may suggest. Depending on the cultural context given, physical spots can be interpreted as nakedness or as a kind of clothing, as badges of shame or of honour, as meaningful language or as a 'barbarian' code. Which of these interpretations prevail depends on the authority a particular culture wields over the readers of such phenomena. Where Western texts manage to silence indigenous interpretations of their own bodily ornamentation, the code of the spotted gains

[59] For further instances in which the Ethiopian Eunuch is seen as superseding Jeremiah, see Jan Joris van Vliet's etching *Baptism of the Ethiopian* [n.d.] (Massing 1995:Fig.61), or a sonnet by the Dutchman Jacobus Revius (1630) (Masssing 1995:189).

[60] In this context, it is interesting to note that some early Church fathers interpret the eunuch's castrated condition as exemplifying "the defeat of libido"; Jerome also suggested that Candace's servant "had made himself a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven" (Courtès 1979:2.1.22, 24).

[61] See e.g. the two versions of the adoration of the magi by Jan Brueghel the Elder (Ertz 1997:Figs. 3,4), which feature a prominently-placed particoloured dog each. Another example where whiteness and hybridity blend is in Hieronymus Bosch's *Adoration of the Magi*, in which an African Balthasar wears a white robe adorned with bestial hybrids (birds with human heads) stitched on a white hem (Fraenger 1975:Figs. 106, 108).

the quality of a supposedly ‘coherent’ web of symbols creating the illusion of a ‘natural’ divide separating spotless Europeans and Christians from ‘defiled’ cultures surrounding them. However, where clarity and authority are lacking, the code of the spotted no longer represents a cultural divide, but a space uniting various ‘decodings’ of hybrid patterns. If spots can become positive physical adjuncts, however, then the entire epistemic edifice of the spotted as code (in the sense of visual, moral and legal code) is under threat. Encoding and decoding symbols of the spotted, then, do not automatically coincide; instead, it is the degree to which Western sources present their interpretation of such symbols as reliable and trustworthy which determines the stability of such discourse.

3. The Spotted in Shakespeare

Titus Andronicus, or the Fall of Rome

Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. (*Exodus* 4:14 (*AV*))

Over the last two centuries, *Titus Andronicus* has seldom been acknowledged the status of a fully-fledged Shakespearean work, and it has almost never been classified among Shakespeare's Roman plays.[1] Until the early 1970s, there seems to have been a general consensus that the play is dull, that it lacks the beauty of diction characteristic of Shakespeare's genius, and that it represents a morbid celebration of extreme violence. However, at least since Albert H. Tricomi's study on "[t]he Aesthetics of Mutilation in *Titus Andronicus*" (1974), several critics have warmed to the play, and have suggested that there is more to *Titus* than a pointless severing of limbs. Various studies have drawn attention to the fact that the play is chiefly preoccupied with 'the matter of Rome', though in quite a different way than Shakespeare's 'classical' Roman plays. *Titus* does not canvass the pulsating, cultivated life on Capitol Hill or the heroic deeds of its noble inhabitants; rather, it depicts a city in demise, a mere shambles systematically dismantled by a horde of barbarious Goths who seek nothing less than the annihilation of the ruling Andronici and their ageing patriarch Titus. When Titus' surviving son Lucius once more restores rule and order in Rome at the end of the play, he can only do so with the support of a Gothic army, which underscores to what extent the imperial city has lost its ethnic and cultural 'purity', a development characteristic of the ways in which late Rome has been historicised since the Renaissance (Vaughan 1997:171-72). Thus, in contrast to *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar* or *Antony and Cleopatra*, which celebrate major milestones in Roman history, *Titus Andronicus* relates the much bleaker tale of Rome's decline and fall.[2]

If one accepts the notion that *Titus Andronicus* rewrites the history of late Rome rather than presenting the individual sufferings of life-like characters, then also some of the stupefyingly brutal scenes, such as Titus' sacrificing of his son Mutius and of his daughter Lavinia, appear somewhat more acceptable, or even meaningful. Since the present study is mainly interested in reading *Titus Andronicus* from a semiotic point of view, this chapter shall not seek to assess the artistic merit of the play. Instead, the focal point of the discussion will rest on how the fall of Rome is mimicked in the play's language, and how the theme of decay ties in with contemporary colonial discourse. Even though literally set in classical antiquity, the narrative of Rome crumbling in the face of a barbarian attack also represents a parable for alternative locations where European (and particularly English) settlements experience the impact of close interaction with supposedly 'uncultivated', non-European

[1] A recent exception is Coppélia Kahn's *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds and Women* (1997).
[2] On the theme of *Titus Andronicus* and Rome, see the articles by Willbern (1978) Miola (1983) Paster (1986) and Loomba (2000). The element of the fall is also present in some other Roman plays, such as in *Julius Caesar*: "*Et tu Brute?* – Then fall, Caesar! [Dies]" (3.1.76).

nations (Vaughan 1997:177). The protagonists embodying this intensifying encroachment upon a newly-discovered 'Englishness' are first and foremost Tamora, the Gothic queen, and her lover Aaron, the 'black Iago' dominating the play. The usurpation of power by these partners united in an 'unnatural' union ushers in a range of familiar symbols of bestiality, disease and lechery which intensify the image of the Fall of Rome throughout the play. How the text operates with these images, and to what extent it subscribes to the 'logic' underlying their symbolic value shall represent the main concern of the ensuing discussion.

A useful starting point for a foray into the symbolism in *Titus* is offered by the so-called Longleat drawing by Henry Peacham (1594-95) (Fig. 54), the oldest and only extant contemporary illustration of a Shakespearean play (Hughes 1994:15). The Peacham drawing has repeatedly puzzled critics for the ways in which it deviates from *Titus Andronicus* as recorded in the three *Quartos* (1594, 1600, 1611) and in the *First Folio* (1623).[3] On the illustration, we see Aaron the Moor proudly erect with sword in hand opposing Titus and his armed guards, in spite of the fact that in the opening scene Aaron belongs to Tamora and her train of vanquished Goths surrendering to the victorious Romans.[4] As Alan Hughes, editor of the New Cambridge edition, points out, Aaron's weapon-wielding pose "could be [mis]interpreted as a threat to Tamora's kneeling sons" by someone unacquainted with the play (1994:21). Several scholars have blamed Henry Peacham for rendering a faulty representation of the play, and have sought to account for this anomaly by claiming that Peacham "drew from memory, without consulting the text" (Hughes 1994:21). However, such a view seems questionable, given the fact that the textual quotes on the same document reproduces longer fragments of the play's actual text. Instead of considering the Longleat drawing as a faithful attempt at freezing the "precise details of a precise moment in a performance of the play" (Levin 2002:332), it appears more meaningful to conceive of it as a conscious reflection on the key themes of the play, which are the corruption of Rome and of human nature.

[3] All textual references are taken from the Oxford text as reprinted in the *Norton Shakespeare*, which is primarily based on the First Quarto (1594). *Titus Andronicus* does not pose any major textual problems, as Samuel Johnson confirms: "[H]ere is very little room for conjecture or emendation; and accordingly none of the editors have much molested this piece with officious criticism" (1765:6.279n.1).

[4] I am ignoring the rather implausible theory suggested by Jane Schlueter that the Roman holding the staff is Saturninus, and that the entire depiction is based on the German adaptation of the play entitled *Eine sehr klägliche Tragœdia von Tito Andronico* (1620). Schlueter's views have been exhaustively dismantled by Richard Levin (2002:323-29).

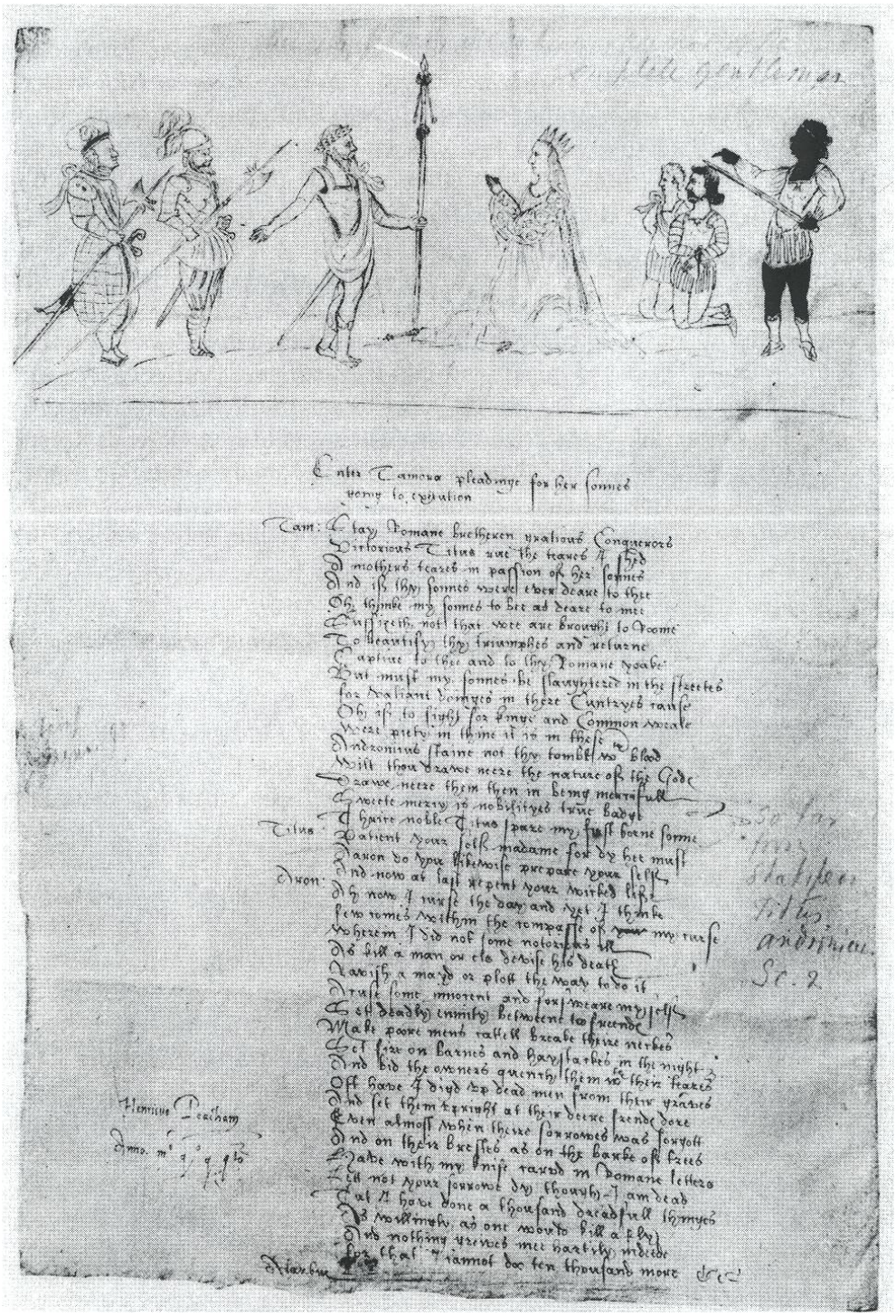

Figure 54. The Longleat manuscript with the drawing (1594 or 1595) by Henry Peacham, followed by some lines of Acts 1 and 5 of *Titus Andronicus*

According to the editor of the Oxford edition of *Titus*, Eugene Waith, the Peacham drawing should be read as a "comprehensive illustration" (1984:22) condensing different scenes within one visual text, and similar approaches have been forwarded by Jonathan Bate, editor of the third Arden edition (1995), and by Richard Levin (2002:334). The approach chosen by Waith, Bate and Levin appears highly promising, especially since the density these critics ascribe to the visual text is also

reflected in the epigrammatic form of the lines quoted on the self-same manuscript. Starting with an excerpt from Tamora's plea for her doomed son Alarbus in the opening scene (1.1.104-21), two apocryphal lines (spoken by Titus) lead over to Aaron's final speech in Act 5, in which the Moor brags about the felonies he has committed after having received his capital sentence (5.1.125-144). Seeing how these quotes constitute a rereading of *Titus* in a nutshell, there is reason to suspect that the illustration was meant as a commentary on the entire play, similarly to the multi-layered commentaries contained in the title pages to other Renaissance plays.[5] Bearing in mind the foregrounding of Tamora and Aaron in the accompanying lines, it would seem that this commentary primarily focuses on the Queen of the Goths, on her 'Moorish' lover, and on the power they excert upon the Romans and Goths surrounding them. And indeed, the expressive gestures by Titus and Aaron, the surprising positioning of the characters and the conspicuous dress of Tamora encompass such a multi-layered commentary.

The illustration establishes a contrast between the Romans on the left and Tamora, the Goths and Aaron on the right which is highlighted by their body language and dress code. Compared to the sword-wielding, resolute Moor, victorious Titus looks surprisingly fragile. There is no mistaking the political and sexual symbolism attached to the armed, manly Aaron and to the disarmed Titus, who, resting his weight on a merely decorative staff, welcomes Tamora and her murderous train with open arms in Lear-like naïveté.[6] A further remarkable hint is dropped in the clothing of Tamora, who, "wear[ing] something like the loose-bodies gown favored by pregnant Elizabethan women" (Kehler 1995:326), modestly hides Aaron's child underneath the bulky folds of her dress. That the spacious robe is designed to conceal her impure condition is also signalled iconographically, by the particoloured patterns of her lavishly ornated sleeves, and by the finely spotted cloak Aaron seems to be gesturing at.[7] The 'staining' of T*amor*a's body by 'unnatural' *love* – which renders the Gothic queen in Bassianus' words "spotted, detested and abominable" (2.3.74) – underscores that the play is centrally concerned with the corrupting of female purity and with the gendering of monstrous hybridity. By linking Tamora's speckled dress and Aaron's dark body, the illustration stages a spectacle of the 'pied' couple which Aaron too draws attention to when, upon being interrupted in his amorous dallying with the Tamora, he blurts out: "We are espied [!]" (2.3.48). Therefore, if Dympna Callaghan is right in assuming that the "vivid depiction of conspicuous racial and gendered difference"

[5] Waith (1984:22-23) cites as examples the title page of the 1615 edition of *The Spanish Tragedy*, and illustrations of some lesser-known 17th plays. Levin documents that the woodcut illustration added to the 1658-64 ballad broadside of *Titus* also followed such a "comprehensive" design (2002:334-337).

[6] "Give me a staff of honour of mine age, / But not a sceptre to control the world" (1.1.198-99). Compare these phallic symbols to the fourth act of the play, in which Titus sends Chiron and Demetrius some weapons and a quote from Horace, stating: "The man upright in life and free from crime needs neither the Moorish javelin nor the bow" (4.2.20-21, translation Greenblatt 1997:413). The Moorish javelin refers both to the physical and phallic weapons of Aaron as well as of Chiron and Demetrius. The obvious point that Aaron "depicts an ominous threat to Titus and Titus' family" and appears "as a kind of proleptic figure warning us of the crimes to follow in Acts 2 and 3" is also made by Levin (2002:333).

[7] Whether Aaron is truly pointing at the Tamora bearing his child is of course questionable, for he might just as well point at Titus' hand, which is chopped off during the play, or at the tip of his sword, which symbolises his destructive virility. Remarkably, even though the Chiron and Demetrius are kneeling further off the stage, the illustrator has positioned them such that they appear to be situated directly below Aaron's raised sword. Their placement *under* Aaron's power amounts to a 'blessing' by Aaron, the evil star whom they follow. In a rite mimicking the knighting of noblemen in chivalric romance, Aaron recognises Chiron and Demetrius as worthy associates for his quest of annihilating Rome.

on the Longleat drawing "point[s] to the inclusivity of Shakespeare's stage" (1998:22), then this inclusiveness also extends to the symbolism of the spotted by which interethnic and intercultural relationships are customarily encoded.

In recent years, many of the critics close-reading *Titus* have sought to relativise Aaron's evil character by foregrounding his love to his child, whose life he defends at arms' point. However, if one follows the text very closely, it appears doubtful whether Aaron's rescue signposts benevolence and humanity, since Aaron loves his son for being a mirror of himself, and for succeeding him as a destroyer of Rome. When Marcus proclaims: "Behold the child. / Of this was Tamora delivered, / The issue of an irreligious Moor / Chief architect and plotter of these woes" (5.3.118-121), he very much introduces the newborn as a counterimage to Christ, or an infant Antichrist embodying the corruption of Rome. Within the general framework of the play, then, Aaron's love for his child may be regarded as evidence that under Saturninus' perverted regime, monstrous "prodigies on earth" (1.1.101) will be welcomed and even protected. This guarding of 'spotted' offspring starkly contrasts with Titus' liberal sacrifice of his 'corrupted' children. No matter whether his sons and daughters deliberately turn against him (like Mutinus) or are mutilated (like Lavinia), they represent impure bodies which must be eliminated to pave the way for a new Rome.

These diametrically-opposed attitudes towards 'purity' and 'corruption' constitute one principal distinction according to which the play's characters are being assessed. The following pages will therefore analyse the multiple identities woven into the character of Aaron, and explain how his evil stimulus may be read as a metaphor for a Europe on the brink of being 'corrupted' by establishing contact with alien nations. Having explained the multiple identities coagulating in Aaron, the section proceeds to discuss how *Titus Andronicus* instrumentalises the Fall of Rome as an image which constantly oscillates with an imaginary Fall of the European within a colonial context.

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As explained in the Introduction, projecting classical and biblical myths upon unfamiliar, disturbing landscapes constitutes the norm rather than the exception in early modern colonial discourse, which is why *Titus Andronicus*' Roman setting and biblical subtexts too may be seen as possessing a colonial dimension.[8] Aaron is not simply a 'Moor serving the Goths' or a 'false Roman', but also a devilish leader corrupting those fallen under his spell, an embodiment of Satan, and a 'debased' colonial subject. All these multiple identities may be see to converge in Bassianus' description of Aaron as a "swart Cimmerian" (2.3.72), which literally refers to the land of the Cimmerians at the gate of Hades,

[8] A colonial dimension to *Titus Andronicus* has been tentatively suggested by Virginia Mason Vaughan (1997:176-77). However, whereas Vaughan perceives the duality of the Old World and the New as mutually exclusive ("This is not a new World play, and its major sources are well-known texts from Ovid and Seneca"), this study accepts the oscillating between classical and colonial settings as a typical feature of colonial discourse.

where Circe meets dark Oceanus in the *Odyssey* (Starnes and Talbert 1955:116).[9] The association of Aaron's dark skin with murky thoughts and the underworld features also occurs in various other passages of the play. It sets in already two scenes earlier when Demetrius, encouraged by Aaron, promises to imprint "Vulcan's badge" (2.1.89) upon Bassianus, an image which simultaneously captures Bassianus' status as a cuckold, as one doomed to death, and as one 'blackened' by false accusations. In the self-same scene, the imagery of the underworld is consolidated by Demetrius' boast: "Per Styga, per manes vehor" ('I am carried through the underworld') (2.1.136), which confirms his allegiance to the 'Cimmerian' Aaron. In *Titus*, these images of a Greco-Roman underworld alternate with impressions of a Judeo-Chrisitan hell, as Bernard Spivack (1958) has shown in his reading of Aaron as the medieval allegory Vice revisited. One instance where images of a pagan underworld are superseded by a Christian concept of hell occurs in Aaron's rhetorical question to Chiron and Demetrius: "And now, young lords, was't not a happy star / Led us to Rome?" (4.2.32-33). The star Aaron refers to is of course not the "star that guided the Magi", as Richard Noble believes (1935:140), but Lucifer, the falling star named in Jesaia (14:12), which the Western tradition since Augustine associates with the Devil (Link 1997:27).[10] As a 'Cimmerian' and as a personification of Satan, Aaron appears as a fallen creature in a double sense, a characteristic singling him out as the supreme leader of those bent on perverting Rome.

Most disturbingly, Aaron's hellish qualities are also associated with his African ethnicity. When Aaron defiantly proclaims: "If there be devils, would I were a devil, / *To live and burn in everlasting fire*" (5.2.147-48, emphasis added), he evokes a setting of the underworld reminiscent of the scorching heat Europeans associate with southern climes, and with skin colour in particular. Furthermore, Demetrius promises to comb Hades "till I find the stream / *To cool this heat, a charm to calm these fits*" (2.2.134-35, emphasis added), thereby alluding both to various physiological readings of colour as a symptom of heat, as well as to associations of ethnicity with epileptic fits. Ironically, Demetrius will find no tributary of Styx cool enough to moderate the heat and the fits fuelled by his fiery teacher Aaron. Quite to the contrary, the only stream capable of subduing Demetrius' desire, at least partially, is the stream of blood of the Andronici running through the play. Yet another identification of dark skin with hell occurs in the description of Aaron's child as "[a] devil" (4.2.63). Shortly before the nurse carrying Aaron's baby enters the stage, Aaron instinctively calls out: "Pray to the devils; the gods have given us over" (4.2.48), and the same term is reiterated several times by the nurse, who seems at a complete loss how to describe Tamora's baby in any more succint way. With reference to the preceding discussion, it is interesting to note that Aaron's child is a devil in a double sense, i.e. being both 'black' as well as a 'hybrid', analogous to the dual mode in which Satan and demons are imagined in the Western tradition.

[9] "She [Circe] came to deep-flowing Oceanus, that bounds the Earth, where is the land and city of the Cimmerians, wrapped in mist and cloud" (Murray 1960-66:11.14-16).
[10] The concept of Lucifer as Satan is also related to Luke 10:18: "And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (*Authorised Version*).

These multiple subtexts of devilish villainy and a corrupted human nature are not limited to Aaron's skin colour alone, but are also meant to be read within an interethnic, colonial framework. As a *Cimmerian*, Aaron also evokes memories of the famous *Cimmaroons*, a group of self-liberated former African slaves based in Panama (Allen 1994:1.6), who were of singular importance for curbing the Spanish expansion in the New World. According to Robin Blackburn, the expression *cimarrones* was first used for "rebellious Indian slaves, but the term was soon extended to Africans who had escaped beyond the reach of Spanish power, whether or not they were linked to the Indian rebels" (1997a:139). These Cimmaroons were well-known to the English since they acted as Francis Drakes' allies in 1572 in his first and unsuccessful siege of Cartagena, the main Spanish trading port for slaves in the West Indies.[11] Drake's alliance with the Cimmarroons was apparently very harmful to the Spanish in Cartagena. As the Spanish authorities in Panama noted in 1572,

> [t]his league between the English and the Negroes is very detrimental to this kingdom, because, being so thoroughly acquainted with the region and so expert in the bush, the Negroes will show them methods and means to accomplish any evil design they may wish to carry out and execute. These startling developments have agitated and alarmed this kingdom. It is indeed most lamentable that the English hand Negroes should have combined against us, for the blacks are numerous. (Sugden 1990:62).

How the pact with the Cimarrons sparked the fancy of Englishmen at home is also mirrored in the suggestion forwarded by Richard Hakluyt that the English should establish a Cimarron colony at the tip of South America in order to control the Straits of Magellan:

> [T]he Symeron [Cimarron] [,] although borne in a hote region, yet by meane […] bredde as a slave, in all toyle farre from delicacie, […] shalbe able to enddure the climate, and think himself a happy man when as by good provision he shal find himselfe plentifully fed, warmly clothed, and well lodged and by our nation made free from the tyrannous Spanyard, and quietly and courteously governed by our nation. To these Symerons we may add condemned Englis[h]e men and women, in whom there may be founde hope of amendement. And using policie we might enjoye those benefits as the Spanniards now do and of many yeares have. (Taylor 1935:1.143)

Hakluyt first published his proposal for a colony inhabited by a motley crew of liberated Spanish slaves and former English convicts in a brief pamphlet in 1579-80, and reiterated the same suggestion in abbreviated form in his *Discourse of Western Planting* (1584), in which he states:

> [H]er Ma[jes]tie [,] havinge S[i]r [F]fraunces Drake and other subjectes already in credite w[i]th the Symerons, a people or greate multitude alreadye revolted from the [S]panishe governmente, […] may w[i]th them and a fewe hundrethes of this nation trayned upp in the late warres of [F]fraunce and [F]flaunders, bringe greate thinges to pase, and that w[i]th great ease. (Taylor 1935:2.318)

The parallel between Hakluyt's proposed Anglo-Cimarron colony and the corrupted Rome ruled by a Cimmerian seems indeed striking, particularly since Aaron is a liberated slave, just like the Cimmarroons, whom Hakluyt intended to "ma[k]e free from the tyrannous Spanyard" (Taylor 1935:1.143). What makes the Cimmarroon-Cimmerian analogy appear even more likely is the fact that the Cimmaroons' native soil lies near Cartagena in present-day Colombia, a city named after classical Carthage, where Roman mythology situates the most prominent of all European-African encounters.[12]

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[11] Drake's alliance with the Cimmaroons and the first siege of Cartagena are described in detail in Philip Nichol's *Sir Francis Drake Revived* (1626). A detailed summary of Drake's first siege of Cartagena and his collaboration with the cimarrones is offered by Sugden (1990:49-65). The relevant Spanish documents have been translated and edited by Irene A. Wright (1951).

[12] According to Robert S. Miola, *Titus Andronicus* also invokes the Carthaginian forests described in Ovid's rendering of the Dido and Aeneas myth (Kolin 2002:202). On the various connotations of Cartagena and Carthage in colonial discourse, see the chapter on *The Tempest* (pages …).

This amalgamation of classical myth and colonial desire in *Titus* is further enriched by the presence of a biblical imagery which has been consistently overlooked in critical appreciations of the play. There is little doubt that the rather unusual name Aaron alludes to the biblical Aaron, Moses' brother and successor, and even though critics have pointed out such a link, the wider epistemic dimension of such a naming has not been scrutinised so far.[13] The link to the Pentateuch suggested here seems all the more likely since another Elizabethan tragedy, *Lust's Dominion* (1599), which closely follows *Titus Andronicus* in language and theme, features a malevolent Moor whose name is *Eleazer*, just like Aaron's son and successor (Num 20:25-28).[14] As an embodiment of evil, Shakespeare's Aaron of course greatly differs from his biblical namesake. Whereas Aaron the Israelite leads his people safely to the chosen land, Shakespeare's Aaron delights in destroying those lending credence to his false prophecies. Interestingly, though, the instrument by which the two Aarons exerts power is the same: the rod. Moses' brother utilises a magic staff to perform miracles and to punish. At one point, Aaron's rod blossoms and yields almonds (Num 17:8) in order to make the Israelites believe.[15] In Exodus the rod turns into a serpent devouring the magic staffs of the pagan Egyptian priests (Ex 7:8-12), and it is also used to direct three of God's ten plagues against Egypt. By force of the rod, the land of Egypt is covered with frogs (Ex 8:1-7), with lice (Ex 8:16-19), and with blood:

> And Moses and Aaron did so, as the LORD commaunded; and he lift[ed] up the rod[,] and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants[;] and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. And the fish that was in the river died[;] and the river stunke, and the Egyptians could not drinke of the water of the river[;] and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. (Ex 7:20-21)

An incessant stream of blood is also what is provoked by Aaron's phallic 'rods', his sword and his genitals. The bloodstream triggered by the Moor bears thus an uncanny parallel to the Nile, which in the Western tradition is believed to spring from an unknown source in the interior of Africa fed by a subterranean stream.[16] The bloodshed in *Titus* likewise emanates from an African and hellish origin whose ultimate source remains unknown to the victimised Andronici for all too long.

Shakespeare's Aaron, then, unifies a variety of negations of Roman culture, of the Israelites (or the chosen people), and of England in one body. This multiplicity and versatility characterising the fashioning of Aaron is what Bernard Spivack in his classic study has coined a "hybrid" image.[17] Yet while Spivack understands hybridity as a blending of different theatrical and epistemological

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[13] Richmond Noble's *Shakespeare's Biblical Knowledge* (1935), which explores several biblical allusions in *Titus*, does not mention Aaron with a single word. Most modern editors fail to comment on the biblical dimension of Aaron's name, and the only one who does, Jonathan Bate in the New Arden edition, cannot make up his mind whether Aaron stands for the "eloquent character in Exodus" or for an entirely different 'Aron' of an obscure classical origin (1995:94). Also Leslie Fiedler acknowledges the Jewish root of Aaron's name ("Aaron's very name connects him with Jewish traditions" (Fiedler 1972:178)), yet without considering the multiple subtexts the Old Testament figure evokes.

[14] On the authorship of *Lust's Dominion*, see the Introduction (page 12). The character of Eleazer has been discussed with Jones (1965:60-68) and Tokson (1982:40-43). For a critical edition of the play, see Bowers (1964-70). A comprehensive critical commentary on the play is offered by Hoy (1980).

[15] In the medieval tradition, this singular event is understood as a sign of fertility prefiguring Mary's conception (Nickelsburg 1982:9-10).

[16] On the Western identification of Gihon with the Nile, see the Introduction (page 8, note 16).

[17] "Aaron is not always the [medieval allegory] Vice, of course, for he is a hybrid. The other part of him is properly Aaron the Moor" (Spivack 1958:380).

traditions, Aaron may also be seen as a hybrid in a symbolic sense, corresponding as he does to the various negations of Eurocentric norms which Western discourse codifies in the symbolism of the spotted. As a 'Moor', a 'Barbarian', a 'false Goth', a 'Cimmaroon' and a fallen angel, Aaron bears the unmistakeable characteristics of an 'impure', 'hybrid' creature. As a transgressor of multiple boundaries, Aaron is alternatingly the leopard, the mentally and physically diseased melancholic, or the incurable lecher. These symbols of the spotted are, however, not solely employed to characterise Aaron the hybrid, but also in order to dramatise the magnitude of the fall of Rome. Since within criticism many of these images have been often overlooked, misinterpreted or only partially understood, the following analysis will close-read them within the multiple epistemological contexts evoked in the play.

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As Dorothea Kehler's study on "That Ravenous Tiger Tamora" (1995) has succintly remarked, *Titus Andronicus* frequently operates with metaphors of bestiality to encode otherness.[18] One of the images customarily overlooked in critical studies is the symbol of the panther, which, as previously shown, early modern discourse uses as a synonym for the leopard. Towards the end of the first act, shortly after Titus has capitulated to the new political order of Rome, Titus invites Tamora and Saturninus "[t]o hunt *the panther* and the hart with me / With horn and hound we'll give your grace bonjour" (1.1.489-90, emphasis added). The theme of chasing the spotted, unnatural cat is reiterated again by Marcus in the early morning before the hunting party is breaking off: "I have dogs, my lord, / [Which] [w]ill rouse *the proudest panther* in the chase, / And climb the highest promontory top" (2.3.20-22, emphasis added). Tragically, what Titus intended as an occasion to reconcile his family with Saturninus' train soon turns against him, as the rules of the hunt are radically altered. Instead of chasing proper game, Saturninus and his allies actually hunt human flesh. Rather than chasing the hart, as Titus proposes, the Saturnii plot to break Titus' heart by murdering Bassianus, ravishing and mutilating Lavinia, and falsely compromising Quintus and Martius in these bloody deeds. Titus' noble hunt "[w]ith horn and hound" has been displaced by a vicious persecution of innocent victims, including the 'horning' (or cuckolding) of Bassianus (Lavinia's husband) and of Saturninus (Tamora's husband). While Titus and his family still genuinely search the woods for the panther, they fail to realise that the beast they are pursuing has been constantly near them in the shape of Aaron, who embodies the allegorical image of the unnatural, lecherous beast.

While the royal hunting party is combing the forest, panther-like Aaron and Queen Tamora consummate their adulterous relationship. Tamora addresses her "lovely Aaron" with a language teeming with symbols of cuckoldry, hybridity and unnatural unions:

[18] Also Coppélia Kahn closes her chapter on *Titus* by drawing attention to the 'ravenous tiger' Tamora (1997:72).

The snakes lies rollèd in the cheerful sun,
The green leaves quiver with the cooling wind
And make a chequered shadow on the ground.
Under their sweet shade, Aaron, let us sit,
And whilst the babbling echo mocks the hounds,
Replying shrilly to the well-tuned horns,
As if a double hunt were heard at once,
Let us sit down and mark their [b]ellowing noise [.] (2.3.13-16)

Whereas the references to sleeping snakes, to the 'mocking' of hounds, and to the answering 'well-tuned horns' bespeak the adultery Tamora and Aaron are about to commit, the passage further specifies the nature of their amorous liaison. The 'sweet shade' under which Tamora and Aaron rest is not uniform, but 'a chequered shadow on the ground', or in other words, a variegated pattern imprinted on the soil by the sun. The image of the 'stained soil' conforms to the common conceptualisation of the female body as a landscape to be possessed, to be colonised, but also to be tarnished. Analogous to Pliny's leopardus myth, Aaron the 'pard' elopes with the lioness-like Tamora in order to consummate their illicit love, thereby gendering a monstrous leopard-like hybrid, "[a] joyless, dismal, black, and sorrowful issue. / […] as loathsome as a toad" (4.2.66-67). But also Tamora's own body, Rome's very own womb, is corrupted in the adulterous act, as Bassianus highlights when reproaching her with the words: "Believe me, Queen, your swart Cimmerian / Doth make your honour of his body's hue, / *Spotted, detested, and abominable*" (2.3.72-74, emphasis added). Having consummated her illicit liaison with Aaron, Tamora will be customarily referred to as a particoloured beast, or a "tiger" (2.3.142, 5.2.5., 5.3.194), whose evil nature has seriously tarnished the 'purity' of Rome. Both Aaron and Tamora, then, are described by a language of hybridity signposting them as fallen creatures.

The panther-metaphor also foreshadows Aaron's trapping of Quintus and Martius in a hole in the forest. In order to blame the murder of Bassianus on Titus' sons, Aaron encourages them to visit "the loathsome pit / Where I espied the panther fast asleep" (2.3.193-94), and makes them tumble into the cavity which is Bassianus' grave. While the audience has long ago 'espied' the 'pied' panther in Aaron, Titus' gullible fail to see through the double-dealing of the Moor, and thus literally *fall* into Aaron's trap, as Quintus highlights when commenting Martius' collapse with the words:

What, art thou fallen? What subtle hole is this,
Whose mouth is covered with rude-growing briers
Upon whose leaves are drops of new-shed blood
As fresh as morning dew distilled on flowers?
A very fatal place it seems to me.
Speak, brother. Hast thou hurt thee with the fall? (2.3.198-203)

The injuries Martius' and Quintus sustain are not physical, but metaphysical or symbolic in nature. The plunge into Aaron's "subtle hole" coincides with the rape and mutilation of Lavinia by Chiron and Demetrius, hence the description of the trap as a vulva-like mouth [...] covered with rude-growing briers / Upon whose leaves are drops of new-shed blood". Martius and Quintus' fall into Aaron's trap is exploited by Aaron and Saturninus to implicate them in the murder of Bassianus and the rape of their own sister, and marks the moment their own voices are silenced by the mouths of their

persecutors. In a theatrical act, Saturninus addresses them with: "Say, who art thou that lately didst descend / Into this gaping hollow of the earth?" (2.3.248-49), thus misrepresenting them as collaboraters of Satan, the fallen angel. Significantly, once they have identified themselves as Titus' sons, Martius and Quintus are not allowed to "speak a word" (2.3.301), for those swallowed by the mouth of the Saturnii are equipped with a false voice speaking on their behalf. Without further ado, Martius and Quintus are sentenced to death justified on false outward appearances ("You see it is apparent" (2.3.292), "the guilt is plain" (2.3.301)). The evidence ushered in is a forged letter, according to which Martius and Quintus killed Bassianus for a bag of gold buried under the elder tree (2.3.264). The false evidence on which Titus' sons are condemned bears the signature of Aaron, literally as well as symbolically. Both the bag of gold and the elder tree are common attributes of Judas, who betrayed Christ for a bag of money, and subsequently hanged himself on an elder tree.[19] On the pretext that they have assassinated Bassianus to "purchas[e]" gold (2.3.275), Martius and Quintus, too, are unjustly sentenced with "never-heard-of torturing pain" (2.3.285).

In the perverted Rome run by Saturninus and his clan, the truth is systematically silenced by a rhetoric operating with euphemisms, ambiguous symbols and false accusations. When Tamora, upon seeing Martius and Quintus, exclaims: "How easily murder is discovered!" (2.3.287), she does not speak about the *discovering* but about the *covering* or hiding of the murder. At the same time, Tamora alludes to the *uncovering* or castrating of the Andronici, symbolised by the amputating of Lavinia's hands and tongue and of Titus' hand. In the "wilderness of tigers" (3.1.53) Rome has turned into after the falls of Bassianus, Martius, Quintus and Lavinia, there is no more trust in the meaning of words. The voices of the just Andronici are forcefully silenced, and replaced with a language of evil which is effective precisely because it systematically distorts the truth. The most explicit reference to this linguistic confusion descending upon Rome is dropped by Lavinia in her final spoken words. Immediately before being gagged, dragged away, raped and mutilated, she shouts at Tamora:

No grace, no womanhood – ah, beastly creature,
The blot and enemy to our general name,
Confusion fall – (*TIT* 2.3.181-83)

While levelling a curse against Tamora and her sons, Lavinia is literally silenced in the midst of her own 'fall', as she falls prey to the violence of the new, monstrous Rome.[20]

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[19] Notice that there are two versions of Judas' death. According to Mt 27:5, he hanged himself, but according to Acts 1:18, he "fell headlong, burst open, and his bowels gushed out". The elder-tree-hanging is widely reflected in English literature, e.g. in Piers Plowman ("And sithen on an elder tree / Hanged himself"), in John Mandeville ("Fast by is the elder-tree on which Judas hanged himself when he sold and betrayed our Lord"), and in *Love's Labour's Lost* 5.2.595 ("Judas was hanged on an elder"). See Jeffrey (1992: "Elder-tree", "Judas") and the *OED* ("elder", n.1).

[20] Rather strangely, Jane Hiles claims that "Lavinia's inability to save herself […] is in part the result of having misconstrued her role in the situation. […] Lavinia cannot refrain from insulting Tamora by lapsing into the accusatory mode. To compound the problem, Lavinia is singularly incapable of constructing a logical argument and consequently drowns in a rhetorical quagmire of her own making" (Kolin 2002:239). However, what Hiles fails to consider is that Tamora and her train arbitrarily execute any member of the Andronicus clan; even the inoffensive "clown" is sentenced with death by hanging (4.4.46). Arguing about Lavinia's poor self-defense is thus not only totally misplaced, but borders even dangerously onto the morbid sarcasm Tamora and her followers level at their opponents.

With the voices of noble Rome silenced, the play is dominated by a language of perversion which is already introduced by Aaron in his opening speech:

Away with slavish weeds [clothes] and servile thoughts!
I will be bright, and shine in pearl and gold
To wait upon this new-made empress.
To wait, said I? – to wanton with this queen,
This goddess, this Semiramis, this nymph,
This siren that will charm Rome's Saturnine
And see his shipwreck and his commonweal's. (2.1.19-25)

Here, Aaron not only confesses his desire to 'impress' his own image on the empress; he also presents her as a mere tool for triggering the 'shipwreck' of the 'commonweal' of Rome. The means by which Aaron the 'natural slave' becomes a prince of darkness is language. It is through the fatal words of the 'siren' Tamora that Saturninus is charmed into supporting Aaron's treachery. Interestingly, Aaron compares Tamora to Semiramis, the Assyrian queen who ruled Babylon, a line which may allude to the Babylonian whore prefiguring the destruction of the world in the apocalypse.[21] However, in early modern discourse, Babylon is often also confused with Babel (see page 7). Aaron's ambition "[t]o mount aloft with th[e] imperial mistress" may thus be read as a subtle reference to Babylon's Nimrod, whose tower represents the same kind of vaninglorious undertaking as Aaron's envisaged rise. Furthermore, the double entendre of Babel/Babylon highlights the fact that the toppling of Rome is parallelled and effected by a linguistic confusion administered by Aaron and the Gothic Queen. Immediately after the stabbing of Bassianus, Lavinia too describes Tamora as "Semiramis", as "barbarous Tamora", and as a creature for whom "no name fits thy nature but thy own" (2.3.119-20). The language of Rome, it seems, falls short of appropriate expressions for the evil to which Rome is now being subjected. It is a foreign tongue introduced by someone outwardly marked as alien (i.e. Aaron), which ushers in the collapse of the eternal city. Characterised by bitter sarcasm, euphemisms, and an inversion of received 'Roman' values, Aaron's voice may only be overcome by a Titus mastering the same deceptive, sarcastic idiom towards the end of the play.

The mocking of noble Rome by the language of its usurpers comes most prominently to the fore in the scene of Lavinia's rape. Knowing that her sons have laid a trap for Lavinia and Bassianus, Tamora claims that the two Romans "have [en]ticed me hither to this place" (2.3.92) to murder her; after which allegation Bassianus is stabbed. The rape of Lavinia is preceded by Chiron's self-ironic "I would I were an eunuch" (2.3.128), and Lavinia's moving plea to be granted an honourable and sudden death is coldly dismissed by Tamora on the pretext that she cannot make sense of her request ("I know not what it means. Away with her!" (2.3.157)). Following the rape and the mutilation of Lavinia, Chiron mocking "Go home, call for sweet water, wash thy hands" (2.4.6-7) sarcastically inverts the values of good and evil, and the roles of offender and victim. In allusion to Judas and the elder tree mentioned in the previous scene, Chiron adds: "An [if] 'twere my cause I should go hang myself" (2.4.9), thus once again misrepresenting Lavinia's destruction as a 'crime' she has brought

[21] I would like to thank Martin Mühlheim for reminding me of the allusion to the Apocalypse.

upon herself. Precisely the same kind of perverted language is what Aaron, Chiron's and Demetrius' tutor, excels in. "[W]as't not a happy star [that] [l]ed us to Rome" (4.2.31-32), Aaron rhetorically asks when meeting Lavinia's rapists, and in the same malicious vein continues: "Did you not use his [Titus'] daughter very friendly?" (4.2.40).

Shortly after applauding Chiron's and Demetrius' crimes, Aaron's malicious jest turns into a complex defense of his own treachery, as the Nurse confronts him with the "devil" of whom Tamora has been "delivered" (4.2.61, 63). Aaron's defense of his child represents by far the most articulate as well as the most skilful self-portrayal of himself as a malevolent 'Moor'. Amazingly, Aaron not only succeeds in saving his own son, but also persuades Chiron and Demetrius that Tamora's position as the empress of Rome may only be safeguarded if the witnesses to the illegitimate birth, such as the Nurse, are silenced. In defense of his son, Aaron delivers a fiery speech in which he opposes various common topoi of early modern colonial discourse with a hellish discourse of his own making:

What, what, ye sanguine, shallow-hearted boys,
Ye whitelimed walls, ye alehouse painted signs,
Coal-black is better than another hue
In that it scorns to bear another hue;
For all the water in the ocean
Can never turn the swan's black legs to white,
Although she lave them hourly in the flood.
Tell the Empress from me I am of age
To keep mine own, excuse it how she can. (4.2.96-104)

According to Aaron's warped logic, it is not the melancholic (i.e. cold and dry) African body which is pathologised, but its opposite, the hot and moist "sanguine" body of the European. Likewise, it is not dark skin but light-coloured skin which he mocks as an unstable physiological condition. By labelling Romans and Goths 'whitelimed walls' and 'painted alehouse signs', Aaron inverts a rhetorical topos commonly imposed on the supposedly 'unwashable', 'unchangeable' dark-skinned non-Europeans.[22] Instead of deploring the impossibility to 'cleanse' dark skin, Aaron actually welcomes the imprenetable nature of his skin, and the protection his colour offers against betraying oneself by blushing. When Chiron, horrified at the thought of his mother's shame, exclaims: "I blush to think upon this ignom[in]y" (4.2.114), Aaron quickly retorts: "Fie, treacherous hue, that will betray with blushing / The close enacts and counsels of thy heart" (4.2.116-17).

Just like taking pride in the 'melancholic' and 'diseased' qualities of his body, Aaron also loves presenting himself and his son as natural slaves and as members of Satan's kin. Aaron's "Look how the black slave smiles upon the father, / As who should say 'Old lad, I am thine own'" (4.2.120-21) builds on the customary reference to Satan as *The Old Enemy* (Forsyth 1987). Aaron not only hails the baby as Satan's own child, but he also presents it as Chiron's and Demetrius' "brother", both in a biological and in a spiritual sense. By appealing to their double kinship with the "thick-lipped slave"

[22] Incidentally, the notion of 'being turned into an alehouse sign' occurs frequently in combination with the proverb "You cannot wash an Ethiopian white", for example in John Fletcher's *Knight of Malta* (1616-18) (Prager 1987:257, 278-79).

(4.3.174), Aaron manages to convince Chiron and Demetrius that the boy shall not be killed, and that he must be hidden from sight. As soon as Tamora's sons seem inclined to protect their new brother's life, Aaron resumes his previous sarcastic irony ("[W]hen we do join in league / I am a lamb" (4.2.135-36)), stabs the Nurse, a key witness to the boy's colour, and implicates Chiron and Demetrius in the deed by having them dispose of her dead body. Pressed for an explanation of this murder, Aaron glibly calls it a necessary "deed of policy" (4.2.147), and proposes that his son should be exchanged for the hybrid child of a countryman of his called Muliteus (notice the affinity to *mule*!), whose skin is allegedly as "fair as you are" (4.2.153). Ever so gullible, Chiron and Demetrius believe Aaron and without delay proceed to carry out his plan, even thanking him "[f]or this care of Tamora" (4.2.169), this time without the slightest hint of irony.

While Tamora's sons are carrying off the dead Nurse, Aaron swiftly disappears to hide his son in a cave, and raise him there in isolation:

I'll make you feed on berries and on roots
And fat on curds and whey, and suck the goat,
And cabin in a cave, and bring you up
To be a warrior and command a camp. (4.2.176-79)

Similarly to the founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus, who were raised by a wolf, Aaron intends to bring up his boy as a barbarian sucking from a goat, an animal which in Renaissance discourse either represents an emblem of apostasy or, even more tellingly, of lust.[23] Aaron plans to tutor his son in vices which in his perverted logic represent the highest virtues. As a successor to Aaron, the child is meant to continue the destruction of Rome initiated by his father, who, even in the face of destruction, shows not the slightest sign of remorse:

Even now I curse the day – and yet I think
Few come within the compass of my curse –
Wherein I did not some notorious ill,
As kill a man, or else devise his death;
Ravish a maid, or plot the way to do it;
Accurse some innocent and forswear myself;
Set deadly enmity between two friends;
Make poor men's cattle break their necks;
Set fire on barns and haystacks in the night,
And bid the owners quench them with their tears. (5.1.125-34)

For the modern reader of *Titus Andronicus*, it is indeed quite troubling how Aaron has fully internalised a rhetoric maliciously levelled at non-Europeans in Renaissance discourse, and thereby sanctions its accuracy by his own appearance on stage. Aaron's self-refential remarks about his depraved nature leave no doubt about how 'Africanness' and skin colour are assessed in the play, and place him within the range of utterly destitute African characters which, as Eldred Jones (1965) and Elliot H. Tokson (1982) have shown, constitute the rule rather than the exception in Elizabethan and

[23] Notice that the goat also stands for schismatics, and as the counterimage of the faithful sheep, a meaning derived from the biblical image of segregating the sheep from the goats at the Last Judgement (Mt 25:31-33) (Jeffrey 1992:692). On the sexual connotations of the goat, see Williams (1994:606-08).

Jacobean plays. From what is known about the reception of *Titus Andronicus* in the 1590s, it appears that the bloody spectacle actually pleased the Elizabethan audience. Among the spectators watching *Titus* was Jacques Petit, a Gascon servant and interpreter based near London, who on the occasion of a performance of the play in January 1596, noted in a letter of his: "[O]n a aussi ioué la tragedie de Titus Andronicus[,] mais la monstre a plus valeu que le suiect" (Ungerer 1961:102). Apparently, Petit found the play's spectacle (*la monstre*) more intriguing than its theme (*sujet*), which merely underscores the fascination exerted by the depiction of violence on the Elizabethan stage. Alternatively, one may also suppose that Petit was not just thrilled by *la monstre*, or the show, but equally by *le monstre*, that is, the monstrous bogeyman Aaron, whose stereotyping was likewise designed to cater for a particular need.[24]

However, Petit's remark may also refer to the one particular aspect which is most 'monstrous' of all, namely the visualising of the corruption of Rome by mimicking it through the 'unnatural' union of Aaron with the Gothic queen. Their sexual rapport is quite explicitly decried as a Satanic deed by the nurse handing the baby ("[a] devil" (4.2.63)) to Aaron. Given the dilemma interethnic unions pose in the anglophone tradition, it is crucial to note that the biblical Aaron, after whom Shakespeare's villain takes his name, is intrinsically linked to a influential biblical passage in which attitudes towards interethnic unions come to the fore. In Numbers 12, we find Aaron and Miriam voicing their reservations in the face of Moses' marriage to an Ethiopian, upon which God intervenes and punishes Miriam for challenging Moses' authority. Recovering this biblical subtext is seminal for understanding the multiple ties by which Aaron's skin colour, his rhetoric skill and his leadership are interrelated.

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For a play featuring an African villain called Aaron, probably the single most important source to consider is one which has rarely been discussed in studies on early modern colonial discourse, namely Numbers 12, according to which "Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses, because of the Ethiopian woman, whom hee had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman" (Num 12:1, *AV*).[25] The theme of this passage – conflicting views on Moses' intercultural and interethnic marriage – is also central to *Titus Andronicus*, which not only opens with Bassianus' resistance against the arranged marriage between Lavinia and Saturninus (1.1.276), but also contains two relationships that are described in a language of interethnic hybridity, that is, the amorous liaison between Aaron and

[24] On the two meanings of *monstre* in French, see the dictionary entries by Cotgrave (1611): "Monstre:m. A monster; a deformed creature; a thing that[']s fashioned, or bred contrarie to nature", and "Monstre:f. […] also, a muster, view, shew, or sight; […]; a demonstration".

[25] Notice that the German adaptation of Shakespeare's play, called *Eine sehr klägliche Tragaedia von Tito Andronico und der hoffertigen Käyserin* (*A Very Lamentable Tragedy of Tito Andronico and the Haughty Empress*) (1620), also topicalises the issue of interethnic unions, yet does away with this biblical subtext. The German 'Aaron', who fathers a 'black' child with the 'white' Queen of Ethiopia (corresponding to Tamora), is simply called 'Morian', to underscore the correlation of his skin colour with his character (Brennecke 1964:1.71-74, 6.26-32; Brauneck 1970: 1.465.19-22, 1.501.13-21).

Tamora, and Saturninus' marriage to Tamora, who is said to possess a dark "hue" and a "cloudy countenance" (1.1.261-62).[26] Since Numbers 12 does not seem to have been included in any critical reading of *Titus Andronicus* before, it will be necessary to introduce both the biblical text and its reception in the Renaissance before returning to what it reveals about Shakespeare's characterisation of Aaron.

The passage in Numbers 12, which appears virtually identically in all major Renaissance Bible translations,[27] is highly puzzling because Moses' marriage to this unnamed 'Ethiopian' is neither mentioned in the preceding nor in the following books of the Pentateuch. Moreover, why Aaron and Miriam should oppose Moses' match remains rather obscure, and is not further specified in the text. Instead of elucidating their ulterior motives, the narrative proceeds to tell how the Lord summons Miriam and Aaron to the temple, and how the two Israelites opposing Moses are punished for their irreverence:

> And the Lorde spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the Tabernacle of the Congregation: and th[e] three came out. And the Lord came downe in the pillar of the [a] cloude, and stood in the doore of the Tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came foorth. And hee saide, Heare now my words: If there be a Prophet among you, I the Lord will make my selfe knowen unto him in a vision, and will speake unto him in a dreame: […] With him will I speake mouth to mouth even apparantly, and not in darke speeches, and the similitude of the Lord shall hee behold: wherefore then were yee not afraid to speake against my servant Moses? And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and he departed. And the cloud departed from off the Tabernacle, and behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and behold, she was leprous. (Num 12:4-11)

Rather strangely, Miriam is severely punished for undermining Moses' authority, whereas Aaron, miraculously, escapes unscathed. Upon seeing Miriam struck with leprosy, Aaron pleads with Moses: "Let her not bee as one dead, of whom the flesh is halfe consumed, when he commeth out of his mothers[']s wombe" (12:12). Moses in turn entreats the Lord to revoke the harsh sentence passed on Miriam, and he receives word that Miriam shall be "shut out from the campe [for] seven dayes" after which time period she may rejoin the itinerant Israelites once more (12:14). Accordingly, Miriam is excluded from the Israelites for one week, and is duly received again among Moses' flock.

For some early Jewish commentators and for the most influential Church fathers, Moses' marriage to this obscure Ethiopian wife represents a great dilemma, not so much because of the status of Moses' wife as an African and a non-Israelite, than owing to the fact that this obscure union reveals the Israelite leader as polygamous. Moses has at this point already long been married to Zipporah, Reuel's daughter, whom he betrothed as a young adult (Ex 2:21).[28] Even though polygamy is common

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[26] Saturninus' description runs: "A goodly lady, trust me, of the hue / That I would choose were I to choose anew. / Clear up, fair queen, that cloudy countenance. / [...] / Rest on my word, and let not discontent / Daunt all your hopes" (1.1.261-68). Notice the irony in the adjective *fair*, and the allusion to Pluto or Hades (Latin *dis*) in *discontent.*

[27] Moses' marriage to an 'Ethiopian' woman (12:1) appears in the *Septuagint*, in the *Vulgate*, and consequently also in all major English Bible translations from Wyclif to the *Authorised Version*. The Hebrew term *Cushite* (Hebr. *kûšît*) is rendered with *aithiops* in the Septuagint, and with *uxor aethiopissa* in the *Vulgate* (Fischer 1977:214). The Geneva Bible (1560) has *woman of Ethiopia*, the Bishop's Bible (1568) *women* [sic] *of Ethiopia*, and the Douai Bible (1609) speaks of *his wife the Aethiopian*.

[28] Zipporah initially seems to accompany Moses and the wandering Israelites (Ex 4:25), yet eventually cohabits with her own father and merely seems to visit Moses occasionally (Ex 18:2), before she vanishes from the surface.

with most Old Testament patriarchs, it does appear problematic in the case of Moses because of the celebrated status the leader of the Israelites enjoys in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Ever since the Early Church, Moses has been revered a paragon of virtue, and early Jewish commentators fashion him into a kind of *Übermensch* to ward off anti-Jewish attacks by classical pagan writers (Oberhänsli-Widmer 1994:passim, Jeffery and Fleming 1992:517). Thus, in order to guard Moses against criticism lampooning him for his carnal desire at an advanced age, Jewish and Christian commentators categorically deny a straightforward, literal reading of Numbers 12. Instead, they propose that Moses' marriage to the mysterious African is merely symbolic in nature, that the 'Ethiopian woman' in question is identical with Zipporah, or that this union actually preceded Moses' marriage with Zipporah. Although none of these three readings seem to be designed to spread colour bias, there is a sense in which they are gradually instrumentalised to foster an animosity against interethnic marriages, particularly from the early modern period onwards.

The interpretation of Moses' marriage to the mysterious Ethiopian being purely symbolic may have been influential in the Spanish tradition,[29] but not in English writing. Anglophone texts either follow the interpretation spearheaded by the early Jewish historian Flavious Josephus (1st cent. AD), according to which Moses led an army of Egyptians and Hebrews against the Ethiopians, thereby ending up marrying an Ethiopian princess called Tharbis (Thackeray 1961:2.10.238-2.11.253).[30] Most English exegetes, though, accept Augustine's claim that the 'Ethiopian' wife is simply Zipporah bearing a different name.[31] Both the Catholic *Douai Bible* (1609) as well as the Calvinist *Geneva Bible* (1560) endorse Augustine's view in their marginal glosses,[32] and also Walter Ralegh believes that "neither had shee [the 'Ethiopian' of Num 12:1] the name of Tharbis, but of Sippora, or Zippora: neither was shee a Negro, but a Madianitish" (1614:8.10.3.151). As Ralegh's usage of the 16th-century term *Negro* indicates, Zipporah's African origin is very much understood in contemporary terms. If Moses were truly married to an African, Ralegh seems to suggest, such a marriage would have hardly won the approval of an Old Testament God punishing transgressions of impurity so harshly in the Pentateuch.

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[29] According to Origen's *Commentaries on the Song of Songs*, Moses stands for the law of God, whereas the Ethiopian woman represents "the Church of Christ, whom the Jews would not accept as the newly beloved of God's law" (Schorsch 2004:106). The complaining Miriam is taken to represent the murmuring Jews who resent God's abandonment of the Synagogue, whereas Aaron is said to stand for the Jewish priesthood who fail to understand the significance of the event (Courtès 1979:2.1.15). Origen's reading is paraphrased in Catholic sources such as the *General Estoria* by the Spanish King Alfonso X (Solalinde 1930:22.17).

[30] This fanciful explanation surfaces for instance in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (c1390). Gower speaks of "a Ring / Moises thurgh his enchanting / Som time in Ethiope made, / Whan that he Tharbis weddid hade" (Macauly 1900:4.648-50).

[31] In order to substantiate such a reading, Augustine rather unconvincingly claims that the term *Ethiopian* (or *Cushite* in the Hebrew text) could in biblical times also be used for Midianites or Saracens. See Augustine's *Quaestionum in Heptateuchum* (Fraipont 1963:Num 20). The passage is paraphrased in Bugner (1979:2.1.58).

[32] See the glosses on Num 12:1 in the Catholic *Douai-Rheims Bible* ("Midianites were also called Aethiopians") and in the Calvinist *Geneva Bible* ("Zipporah was a Midianite, and because Midian bordered on Ethiopia, it is sometime in the Scripture comprehended under this name").

The same point is made even more succinctly by Jean Calvin in his *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses*. According to Calvin, there is no questioning Moses' exemplary chastity. It would be "absurd to charge the holy Prophet with the reproach of polygamy", Calvin claims, since "as an octogenarian, he would have been but little suited for a second marriage". The references to an Ethiopian woman must therefore

> refer to Zipporah, who is called an Ethiopian woman, because the Scripture comprehends the Midianites under this name: although I have no doubt but that they maliciously selected this name, for the purpose of awakening greater odium against Moses (Bingham 1845-49:Num 12:1).

By writing off Moses' marriage to an Ethiopian as a piece of slander, Calvin echoes an aversion against interethnic marriages which is fairly widespread in the early modern period, and which finds its equivalents in other biblical protagonists which are 'Westernised' in order to consolidate the myth of a European-like Israelite nation. The same kind of 'whitewashing' occurs with the famous bride in the *Song of Songs* (1:4-9), whose dark skin colour is said to be merely symbolic rather than physical (Courtès 1979:2.1.14-16),[33] with the Queen of Sheba, who is frequently 'Europeanised' in medieval culture (de Weever 1998:4-52), or with the Ethiopian Eunuch, who becomes a European Eunuch with John Chrysostom, with Jean Calvin and in other Renaissance texts.[34]

In the case of Moses' Ethiopian wife, though, this tendency of "play[ing] down nigritude" (Courtès 1979:2.1.32), does not seem to have been capable of completely silencing the original text. There are biblical commentators like Bishop Hall (1574-1656) who take the equation of Moses' Ethiopian wife with Zipporah to mean that Zipporah must have been black (Washington 1974:15), and her African status is also affirmed in Jacob Jordaens' (1593-1678) portrait of *Moses and Zipporah*, "one of the most powerful paitings involving blacks in all of Dutch art" (Blakely 1993:96) (Fig. 55). In spite of the continual denial on behalf of biblical commentators, then, the original wording of the biblical text affirming the wife's African ethnicity would have still been remembered during the Renaissance. Consequently, Miriam's and Aaron's criticism of Moses' marriage may have likewise been understood as a critique of an interethnic union sought after by the Israelite leader.[35]

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[33] See for instance the comment by Gregory of Elvira, who exclaims: "I admit to being confused. How can the Church say she is black and beautiful, whereas she who is black cannot be beautiful? How can she be black if she is beautiful, or beautiful if she is black?" (Courtès 1979:2.1.31). According to Courtès, virtually "the entire Christian tradition accepts Origen's exegesis, according to which the [black] bride represents the Church of the Gentiles [i.e. non-believers]", and therefore is not to be taken literally (1979:2.1.15). One major work through which this view was popularised is Isidore of Seville's *Allegories of Holy Scripture* (Courtès 1979:2.1.26).

[34] On John Chrysostom's reading of the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch, see Courtès (1979:2.1.25-26). See also Calvin's *Commentaries upon the Actes of the Apostles* (Fetherstone 1585) and Melchior Küsel's Emblem book (1679:21), which both treat (and depict) the Eunuch as a European.

[35] As Jonathan Schorsch points out: "The approach of positing anti-Black sentiment in the words of Miriam and A[a]ron increased after the fifteenth century and sharpened in detail" (2004:107).

Figure 55. Jacob Jordaens' (1593-1678) *Moses and Zipporah*
(Blackburn 1997a:32)

If Moses' Ethiopian wife successfully withstands erasure in Renaissance culture, it would appear highly likely that also the punishment God inflicts on the rebellious Miriam would be situated and interpreted within such an interethnic context. Having criticised Moses for his marriage with the Ethiopian wife, Miriam is smitten with leprosy ("[A]nd behold, Miriam became leprous, [white] as snow"), which may seem a strange and a vastly exaggerated punishment for the criticism she voices. However, for an early modern reader acquainted with metaphors pathologising colour, such a penalty might appear again quite meaningful. In the Old Testament, God's retributions mostly follow the principle of reciprocity. When the servant Gehazi steals from Namaan the leper, he is himself cursed with the disease of his victim by his master ("The leprosie therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seede for ever" (2 Kings 5:27)), upon which he truly becomes "a leper as white as snow". From a Renaissance perspective, a similar reciprocity may have been perceived between criticising the 'leprous' colour of Moses' wife and being smitten with leprosy. In addition, a further likeness may be seen between Miriam's reservations about the hybrid nature of Moses' marriage and the hybrid body she subsequently inhabits. Miriam does not become *wholly* white, but only partially so, being described by Aaron as "one dead, *of whom the flesh is halfe consumed*, when he commeth out of his mothers' womb" (Num 12:12, emphasis added). As some biblical scholars have suggested, the 'snow-

like' quality of her disease descending from the divine cloud most probably does not refer to the colour she attains, but to the "flakiness of the lesion" (Wright and Jones 1992:IV:278). Since the word *white* does not appear in the Hebrew original, Renaissance translations either omit it in their translations (see the *Bishop's Bible* and the *Geneva Bible*), or mark it as an addendum to the text.[36] It seems highly likely, then, that Renaissance readers would not have imagined Miriam as a body punished with 'whiteness', but as a spotted creature, just the way lepers were customarily depicted.

Curiously, while Miriam is punished, exiled and only healed after a period in isolation, Aaron, who seemed to voice the complaint together with Miriam, escapes punishment.[37] Unharmed as he is, Aaron intervenes on Miriam's behalf, and pleads with Moses to ask for forgiveness, upon which God limits Miriam's leprosy to seven days.[38] Due to this intervention, Aaron is widely revered as the patron saint of lepers in medieval culture (see Fig. 56). This interpretation of Aaron is perhaps also related to the fact that it is him, together with Moses, who receives God's commandments on the purity laws on leprosy in the first place (Lev 13:1, 14:1, 14:33, 15:1). As a master of ceremonies, Aaron is not only preoccupied with segregating lepers from society, but also with healing and reintegrating them in society. As a spokesman against Moses supposedly 'impure' union as well as against the 'impure' state of Miriam's body, he seems to be principally concerned with the "getting of a lawful race" (*ANT* 3.13.107), and it is significantly Aaron, and not Moses, who will pass down the leadership of the Israelites from one generation to the next until the advent of Christ.[39] Like the divine son whom he prefigures, Aaron is first and foremost a healer attempting to free Israel from mentally and physically 'impure' conditions.

[36] The *Authorised Version* reads: "Miriam became leprous, [white] as snow" (Num 12:10).
[37] See the Douai-Rheim's explanatory note claiming that "Aaron was not publickly punished, lest therby he had been made contemptible to the people, but was otherwise cha[s]tised" (Num 12:10).
[38] Notice that the enigmatic number seven, a memory of the creation, reverberates throughout the discourse on leprosy in the Old Testament. In Levitical law, the priest is required to decide after seven days what to do with leprous people, garments, houses, i.e. whether to re-allow them into society, or whether to exile them or to declare them permanently unclean. The same numbers reappears later on again in Naaman's sevenfold washing in the river of Jordan, which cleans himself of leprosy (2 Kings 5:14).
[39] See the genealogy reaching from Aaron to John the Baptist prefixed to the *Authorised Version* (1611:16).

Figure 56. Aaron blessing an exiled leper. *Octateuch* (13th c.).
Rome. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana MS gr.746, fol. 281 recto
(Brody 1974:Fig. 8)

Shakespeare's Aaron is in many ways a perversion of the biblical Aaron described above. Instead of guarding the purity and health of the Romans, he seeks to corrupt the state and its rulers. As a fallen prophet, he actively furthers the destruction of the Roman state, and relishes in tormenting its citizens. The leadership of "[g]ood Aaron" (3.1.191) thus diametrically opposes the one of his biblical namesake, who powerlessly watches his stubborn, depraved people constantly transgressing God's commandments. In contrast to the Romans and also his fellow Goths, both of whom are attempting to build a community, Aaron sows seeds of enmity and mutual distrust among friend and foe. The isolation Aaron seeks and spreads also corresponds to the seclusion he finds himself in, a condition which he visibly enjoys.[40] Throughout the play, Aaron keeps council with none but himself, and of all characters he is the one who speaks most frequently in soliloquies. His furtiveness enables him to remain constantly ahead of his allies and his enemies, setting his traps well ahead in time, and nimbly warding off approaching danger. The manifold scams he masterminds have no uniform design, and sometimes seem to be devised spontaneously on the spur of the moment. Astoundingly, he manages to escape punishment until the very end of the play, and even the strange death sentence passed on him (being starved while half-buried in the earth) will allow him to speak almost interminably. This sets

[40] For a stimulating interpretation of Aaron's isolation as a Faust-like condition, see Barroll (1975:3.359-60).

him clearly apart from Chiron, Demetrius, Tamora and Saturninus, who are all gagged or stabbed on the spot.[41]

In his capacity to elude punishment, Shakespeare's Aaron emulates the biblical Aaron, who emerges miraculously unscathed in Numbers. The glib tongue with which Shakespeare's Aaron disguises his own treacherous deeds as the transgressions of others is mainly what distinguishes him from those surrounding him. This gift of rhetoric is what characterises his biblical namesake, too. In Exodus, Aaron must repeatedly defend Moses against the reproaches by a muttering crowd, and God explicitly designates him as Moses' spokesperson: "You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth […] he shall serve as mouth for you" (Ex 4:14-15). Aaron's rhetoric skill soon becomes proverbial ("Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well" (*Exodus* 4:14 (*AV*)), and quite the same talent enables Shakespeare's Aaron to push Rome to the brink of its own destruction. Ever the wily Sophist, Aaron acquaints the ruling Saturnians and Goths with an idiom of sarcasm and sadism which turns the once so noble eternal city into a hell on earth.

Aaron's rhetoric skill is also drawn attention to in a cryptic statement by Titus, who reminds his brother Marcus to exert caution when persecuting Aaron, Tamora and her sons: "[I]f you hunt *these bear-whelps*, then beware! / The dam will wake and if she … you once" (4.1.96-97). In the Renaissance, the bear was often said to constitute a monstrous animal, based on Pliny's claim that it gave birth to "white and shapeless lumps of flesh […] without eyes or hair" which were "slowly lick[ed] into shape" by the mother's tongue (*Natural History* 8.54.126). Even though the myth of the shapeless baby bears was rejected by the leading naturalist Conrad Gesner (Topsell 1607:37), and also by later authorities such as Thomas Browne (1646:3.6.116-117), the myth as such was certainly preserved in literary works. The Plinian bear does for instance feature in Golding's Ovid, whose retelling of the rape of Philomen served as the principal source for the violation of Lavinia. Crucially, Golding uses precisely the same odd term "bearwhelp" (1587:15.420), which also features in the passage quoted above. In *Titus Andronicus*, the expression is most probably intended as a metaphor for Chiron and Demetrius being "licked" into shape by their mother Tamora and their self-appointed mentor Aaron. Furthermore, Renaissance writers frequently employ the bear as a symbol of unrestrained sexual lust, as for example Conrad Gesner, who writes: "A Beare is of a most venerous and lustfull disposition, for night and day the females with most ardent inflamed desires, doe provoike the males to copulation, and for this cause at that time they are most fierce and angry" (Topsell 1607:37). This bear-like lust represents a key instinct governing the behaviour of Aaron, Tamora and

[41] Notice that the curious death sentence passed on Aaron may be related to the discussions of Aaron's death in Judeo-Christian thought, which have been comprehensively studied by Haim Schwarzbaum (1962). According to Schwarzbaum, various Jewish and Christian commentators were greatly puzzled by the question of how "the Angel of Death [could] seize the man [Aaron] who once succeeded in curbing the same Angel" (1962:226), and a similar problem may be seen in the question of how to adequately punish a character who willingly conspires with the devil and with the underworld.

her depraved sons, and one way in which this unrestrained libido is expressed is by the multiple references to the pagan god Saturn in the play.

In Roman mythology (as e.g. with Ovid), *Saturnia* is a synonym for Hera, who has the chaste, spotless heifer Io guarded against the amorous advances of Zeus. Argus, Io's faithful guardian, is stabbed by Hermes, upon which Saturnia (or Hera) decides to immortalise his eyes on the feathers of the peacock. This myth of the attempted staining of Io, which is frequently alluded to in Renaissance literature and in Renaissance painting (see page 56), also represents a highly evocative subtext in *Titus Andronicus*. Similarly to the Argus myth, Shakespeare's play revolves around the staining of Lavinia, the pure Roman maid, and the dismembering of Titus, her faithful guardian. In contradistinction to Ovid's Saturni*a* (or Hera), though, Shakespeare's Saturninus does not attempt to protect those entrusted to his power, but rather turns a blind eye on the corruption spreading under his regime. Seemingly ignorant of Tamora's adulterous relationship with Aaron, Saturninus fully approves of, and even actively collaborates in, the evil designs of the Moor, as may be gleaned from the support he lends Aaron in the hunting scene (2.3). Conversely, Aaron too testifies to the closeness of their relationship by repeatedly referring to the pagan deity *Saturn* in his speech (2.1.23, 2.1.90). At one point, Aaron even declares himself to be governed by the planet Saturn, when addressing Tamora ("Madam, though Venus govern your desires, / Saturn is dominator over mine" (2.3.30-31)), and given the prominence of this self-identification in the crucial hunting scene, the lack of critical commentary on the image of the 'Saturnine melancholic' is truly surprising.[42] Since the figure of Saturn ties together several loose strands associated with the symbolism of the spotted (i.e. melancholy, disease, lechery, castration, death), it seems worthwhile exploring this metaphor in further detail. Renaissance sources often arbitrarily apply the epithet 'Saturnine' to 'melancholic', 'diseased' or 'fallen' bodies. How these multiple symbolic associations of Saturn tie in with the early modern pathologisation of skin colour, and how they are adapted in *Titus Andronicus*, will be elucidated below.

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The Renaissance concept of Saturn amalgamates elements from classical and medieval readings, and the figure may be thus best explained by reviewing its genesis in the Western canon. The Roman mythical god Saturn, corresponding to Kronos among the Greeks, possesses a dual nature which unites positive and negative qualities. On the one hand, Kronos acts as the benevolent god of agriculture, whose harvest festival unites men and women of all social ranks. On the other hand, Kronos also embodies the "gloomy, dethroned and solitary god conceived as 'dwelling at the uttermost end of land and sea', 'exiled beneath the earth and the flood of the sea'" (Klibanski et al. 1964:134). As a ruler of

[42] See the brief research note on 'melancholic' Aaron by Eldred Jones (1963), and the brief discussion of *Titus Andronicus* in Linda Woodbridge's *The Scythe of Saturn* (1994:172-73). Also Robert S. Miola briefly touches upon the figure of Saturn in *Titus Andronicus* (1983:211-15) yet limits himself to an Ovidian view of the classical god, and thereby misses out on the highly influential medieval portrait of Saturn as a wicked, melancholic deity.

the gods in the "world below" (*Iliad* 14.274, 15.225), he is said to live in or even beneath Tartarus, and also "passe[s] for the god of death and the dead" (Klibanski et al. 1964:135). Kronos is both a progenitor of gods and men, as well as a devourer of children, an eater of raw flesh, and a god demanding human sacrifice from the barbarians. This destructive bent in his nature is also reflected in his abuse of the sickle for castrating his father Uranus (Klibanski et al. 1964:135), an act which reveals a polarity likening him simultaneously to Adam (the progenitor) and Cain (the murderer), to Noah (the father) and to Ham (the Oedipal son).

In the transformation of Greek Kronos into Roman Saturn, this ambivalence is further reinforced by worshipping him as a guardian of wealth, while also associating him with the ill-omened planet subsequently named Saturn. With Cicero and Seneca, Saturn is a "cold" and "windy" (or dry) planet (Klibanski et al. 1964:137-38), a characterisation which in medieval times feeds into the refashioning of Saturn into a 'melancholic' (i.e. cold and dry) heavenly body. Roman writers unanimously classify Saturn as an 'evil' planet, in contradistinction to the 'good' Jupiter or Venus (Klibanski 1964:140). The slowness of Saturn's revolution is sometimes interpreted as conferring an indolent, sluggish characters on those born under its influence, and Saturn is consequently associated with several diseases, such as dropsy or rheumatism (Klibanski et al. 1964:144). Saturn is frequently said to possess a sad, thoughtful temperament, and this association is still preserved in the epithet *Saturnine* ('sluggish, and gloomy in temperament'), which is preserved in several European languages (Klibanski et al. 1964:127; *OED* "Saturnine" 1a). Even though Neoplatonists like Plotinus question the negative traits of Kronos/Saturn by associating the god with intellect (νους),[43] the classical tradition as a whole associates Saturn with a polarity of good and evil in which the sinister connotations mostly prevail (Klibanski et al. 1964:153-58).

With early Christian authors, who are keen to eradicate the veneration of pagan gods and the belief in astrology, Saturn's negative qualities are emphasised even more. The Church fathers Tertullian, Ambrose and Augustine recognise Saturn as a particularly vulnerable target for anti-pagan attacks. Most importantly, these Church fathers do not portray Saturn as an evil god, but as a fallen human. Early Christians take the duality in Saturn, which Gnostics embrace as a proof of the concurrent presence of good and evil in humans, as proof that Saturn cannot be divine, based on the premise that divinity must constitute a pure and unchangeable condition (Klibanski et al. 1964:160). Augustine in particular seizes the opportunity to lambast the entire ancestry of pagan gods by ridiculing the worshipping of Saturn, the most ancient of gods, as the deity of time: "For what else do they [i.e. the worshippers of Saturn] betray but that all their gods are temporal, since they make Time itself the father of them?" (Klibanski 1964:162-63). Following the extensive textual legacy against

[43] Plotinus especially relies on the following passage from Plato's *Cratylus*: "At first sight it might seem an irreverence to call Zeus the son of Kronos, but it is quite apt to say that he must be thte offspring of a mighty intellect. For the word κόρος does not mean 'son', but signifies the pure and unadulterated mind itself" (Cratylus 396b, in Klibanski et al. 1964:153-54).

Saturn by the Church fathers, many medieval writers regard Saturn as emblematic for the 'pagan' deities venerated outside Europe and the Mediterranean. The ominous Old English dialogue *Solomon and Saturn* (n.d.), for instance, identifies Saturn as the god "of Libya and Greece, […] [and] of the Indian realm" and as the King of the 'Chaldees', a mysterious nation situated either in Asia or in present-day Ethiopia (Klibanski et al. 1964:171). Overwhelmingly, though, the burgeoning association of Saturn with evil in the West is not rooted on Saturn's status as a pagan deity alone, but grows out of natural philosophy and astrology.

After the formation of the doctrine of the four humours in the 4th century, all of the four juices are allocated one planet named after the classical deities: Jupiter for the sanguine, Mars for the choleric, Venus for the phlegmatic and Saturn for the melancholic temper (Klibanski et al. 1964:127). In this tetrapartite scheme, the melancholy status of Saturn is seen to be confirmed by the slow revolution of the planet, and by its 'dry' and 'cold' nature which, according to classical Roman writers, characterises this heavenly body itself. Once 'melancholic' Saturn has been linked to the melancholic human temper, many medieval authors describe the god in a language which evokes exactly the same negative associations the 'othered' melancholic does. With Bartholomew Anglicus, the one born under Saturn is of a "blacke and leadye" colour and "loveth stinking beastes and uncleane, sower [sour] things and sharpe: for of their complection melancholike humour hath masterie" (Bateman 1582:23.130r). The same stereotyping is expanded by Michael Scotus (c1175-1234), who writes:

> The Saturnine man is the worst of all men, and his facial and temperamental peculiarities reflect the vileness of his whole appearance. His skin is dark, brown, yellowish, or almost greenish his eyes are small and deep-set, but keen-sighted, and seldom blinking; his voice is weak; his regard is bent on the ground; his beard is scanty; his shoulders are bowed; he is sexually weak and inclined to impotence, but has a good memory; his understanding is crude, his mind sluggish, his brain slow of comprehension; moreover, he is timid, depressed, thoughtful, seldom laughing or even cheerful; lazy, envious, negligent in dress, boring in speech, deceitful, rapacious, thievish, ungrateful, miserly and misanthropic (*Liber introductorius*, quoted in Klibanski et al. 1964:191).

Described as impotent but lustful, sluggish yet cunning, physically weak though dangerously treacherous, Scotus' melancholic embodies a hotchpotch of negations of the norm common to the pathologisation of diseased bodies in Western discourse. The same characterisation resurfaces again in the *Roman de la Rose*, and in the writings by John Lydgate, John Gower and Geoffrey Chaucer (Klibanski et al. 1964:193). In the *Knight's Tale*, the planet Saturn, when addressing Venus, describes his effect on human beings as follows:

> My course, that hath so wyde for to turne,
> Hath moore power than woot ['knows'] any man.
> Myn is the drenchyng in the see so wan ['dark'];
> Myn is the prison in the derke cote ['cell'];
> Myn is the stranglyng and hangyng by the throte,
> The murmure and the cherles [churls'] rebellyng,
> The groynynge, and the pryvee empoysonyng;
> I do vengeance and pleyn correccioun,
> Whil I dwelle in the signe of the leoun.
> Myn is the ruyne of the hye halles,
> The fallynge of the toures and of the walles
> Upon the mynour ['miner'] or the carpenter.
> I slow Sampsoun, shakynge the piler;

And myne be the maladyes colde,
The derke tresons, and the castes olde;
My looking is the fader of pestilence (Benson 1987:1.2454-2469).

Chaucer's Saturn presents himself as a planet of darkness ruling over murky dungeons, outrageous crimes and pitiless killings, and who is also associated with 'churls' rebelling against the state, just like the figure of Ham in numerous medieval texts (see pages 107-08). Said to be furnished with far more power than is generally known, Saturn not only orchestrates the termination of life by crime and by disease, but also triggers the collapse of civilisation, as in the reference to 'the fallyinge of the toures and of the walles' in biblical and in secular times.

This extensive catalogue of evils Chaucer ascribes to Saturn is reiterated, expanded and modified in the *Schönspergerscher Kalender* (1495), which sets out to discover Saturnine qualities in human flesh:

The planet Saturn is the highest and the greatest and the most worthless, and is cold and dry and the slowest in his course. The planet is hostile to our nature in every way and stands over to the east, and is a planet of wicked and worthless men who are thin, dark and dry, and [it] is a planet of men who have no beard, and white hair, and who wear unclean garments. Children who are born under Saturn are misshapen of body and dark with black hair, and have hair on the skin, and little hair on the chin, and with a narrow chest, and are malicious and worthless and sad, and like unclean things, and would rather wear dirty linen than fine, and are unchaste and do not like to walk with women and pass the time, and also have all evil things by nature. The hour of Saturn is the hour of evil. In that hour God was betrayed and delivered to death. (Klibanski et al. 1964:195).

Here, the Saturnine man embodies the 'misshapen' creature whose outward corruption is also infallible proof of his inward corruption. Preferring unclean and dirty garments over pure and clean linen, the Saturnine person relishes in negating the norm. Actively seeking evil, the Saturnine man is bestial (hairy), physically deformed, mentally insane, as well as lecherous. All these qualities are in turn projected onto ethnic, somatic and cultural difference, that is, onto the dark skin of a 'dry' body which is said to prosper in the East, the main medieval epicentre of 'otherness'.

As the planet of evil, Saturn is conceived along similar lines as Lucifer, the fallen star. The association of Saturn with a downward movement is originally not beset with any specifically negative connotations, but merely expresses a belief shared in Gnosticism and in several parts of the East that the planets bestowed their qualities on human beings by 'falling' on the earth. The Gnostic commentator Servius (4th c. AD), for instance, shares the belief that when descending towards the earth, "they [i.e. the souls] drag with them the lethargy of Saturn, the irascibility of Mars, the sensuality of Venus, the greed for gain of Mercury and the lust for power of Jupiter" (*Commentary in Aeneid* 6.714, in Klibanski et al. 1964:157). During the medieval period, however, Saturn is gradually conceived of as a 'falling' planet, and is depicted accordingly. On a French 13th-century manuscript translation of the introduction to astrology by Albumasar (Abû Ma'šar) (787-886 AD), the foremost

astrologer of the Middle Ages in the Islamic world and the Christian West, Saturn is shown as a majestic figure, who falls from his seat and finally tumbles headlong towards the earth (Figs. 57-58).[44]

Figures 57 and 58. Falling Saturn on a 13th-century French manuscript translation of the introduction to astrology by Albumasar (Abû Ma'šar) (9th c. AD)
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 7330 (Klibanski et al. 1964: Figs. 20, 22)

More frequently, though, Saturn is represented as 'fallen' in a metaphorical sense only. As a corrupted monarch, he rules over churls and criminals, over servants, menial labourers and generally those performing 'unclean' activities, such as herding domesticated pigs and taming wild boars. The paraphernalia of Saturn are startingly similar to those attributed to the allegorical figure of death in the Western tradition, being first and foremost the sickle or the scythe (for castration) and the hourglass (for the passage of time). Often Saturn is shown as a near-naked, emaciated figure standing or seated on a cart pulled by dragons, or shown devouring new-born babies. Saturn's unnatural lust is further codified iconographically by having him accompanied by the ram, the allegorical beast signalling a lustful disposition.[45] As a 'fallen' (hu)man, Saturn frequently bears the markers of otherness typical of early modern colonial discourse, wearing a turban (Klibanski 1964:Fig. 39) or being distinguished by his savagely unkempt hair (Klibanski 1964:Fig. 52). Alternatively, 'fallen', melancholic Saturn is also represented with dark skin. On Albrecht Dürer's famous portrait of *Melencolia* (1517), melancholy is allegorised not as a male but as a female fallen angel who has acquired an 'unnatural', dark hue by a Phaëton-like fall (Fig. 59).

[44] Notice that in Albumasar's works, Saturn constantly occupies the role of a destructive force. On the transit of Saturn over other planets, he writes: "If Saturn is passing above Jupiter, this indicates the death of some kings of al-Ğibāl, the ruin of its land, and the destruction of most of the people in it; the occurrence of death among scorpions and snakes, together with a lack of rain, and much blowing of the winds. […] If it is passing above Venus, this indicates serious illnesses affecting the people in most of the countries, together with a lack of wetness" (Yamamoto and Burnett 2000:8.3). Various similar passages confirm Albumasar's readinng of Saturn as the celestial body triggering death and destruction.

[45] See Klibanski's (1964) reprint of Saturn and his people in a selection of lesser-known German, French, Italian and Dutch manuscripts, woodcuts, engravings and paintings from the 14th to the 16th century (Figs. 38-42, 46-49, 52-53).

Figure 59. Dürer's portrait of Melancholy,
allegorised as a dark-skinned, fallen Angel
(Klibanski et al. 1964:Fig. 1)

As explained in the chapter on metaphors of illness, Jean Bodin singles out the humour named black bile or 'melancholia' as the source triggering dark skin colour with southern nations. Dürer's allegoric painting, however, is not necessarily related to the argument Bodin voices several decades later. Rather, the dusky hue of the female allegorical figure may simply conform to the medieval belief expressed e.g. by Hildegard of Bingen, that melancholics typically possess a darker skin, since their blood is blackish and their vessels dim (Schulz 1955:2.117). According to Hildegard, this applies particularly to melancholic women, whose complexion is said to be 'mixed with a blueish-gray and black tint' (Schulz 1955:2.139).

Bearing in mind the life-like portraits of Africans Dürers drew before completing *Melencolia* (Blakely 1993:Figs. 24, 25), the distinctly European physiognomy of the allegorical figure above makes it seem quite unlikely that Dürer wanted 'melancholy' to be read as an emblem of non-European ethnicity. Then again, the deliberate darkening of the fallen angel's complexion leaves no doubt about the facility with which the figure of Saturn could be exploited for projecting pejorative narratives onto dark skin. Embodying Saturn and Satan in one, Dürer's brooding angel is shown awaiting the setting of the sun and the rise of the 'dog star' (or Sirius), illustrated in the airborn canine carrying the banner of melancholy. As a minister of darkness, Saturnine melancholy is a fallen humour, whose actions of keeping time, brooding and sleeping all show it to be a force anticipating death and demise.

To return to *Titus Andronicus*, the ills attributed to the 'Saturnine' body in the Western tradition are also very much Aaron's characteristics. Tamora's servant and lover is a brooding, solitary figure replete with unfulfilled ambitions, who devises his malevolent schemes in isolation. Just like Saturn 'harvests' the member of Uranus, so too Aaron chops of the hands and heads of the Andronici, the nourishers of Rome. The sickening "trimming" of Lavinia and Titus instigated by Aaron presents him in a position not unlike that of Ham, the castrating mocker. A possible allusion to Ham is suggested by the very explicit references to the "(b)ark" in the arrival of Titus as a Noah-figure (1.1.71), and in Aaron description of Tamora as a naval vessel ("(H)ark, Tamora, the empress of my soul" (2.3.40); "your mistress-ship be Emperial" (4.4.40)). Also, Aaron's plea to Chiron and Demetrius (corresponding to Sem and Japhet) not to use their swords against each other ("For shame, put up" (2.1.53)), but against the one to be 'shamed' (i.e. Titus) and against his daughter bespeak Aaron's probable self-fashioning as Ham. Protecting his own 'unnatural' hybrid offspring begot upon Tamora, Aaron proves himself an antithesis to Noah, the saviour of natural beasts. Seeking the forbidden and pursuing the destruction of everything natural, Aaron embodies the pagan god blaspheming against divine creation.

Furthermore, the 'Saturnine' or melancholic disposition of Aaron is reflected in his 'effeminate' physiology. Melancholics are traditionally said to inhabit 'unstable' bodies which have much in common with the perverted physiology the Western misogynistic tradition projects onto women. Significantly, whereas the male body is commonly identified with the 'sanguine', or warm and moist physical type, the female is by definition cold and dry or melancholic, and thus conceptualised as the negation of the male. Western allegories underscore this affinity of melancholy with the female, though not so much by allegorising melancholy as a female figure (as in Dürer), than by portraying melancholics as 'effeminate' male figures. A prime example of the stereotyping of melancholy as an 'effeminate' male is preserved on a 15th-century manuscript illustration belonging to the guildbook of the barber-surgeons of the City of York (Fig. 60). In comparison to the other four

temperaments, ‘melancholy’ looks much more immature, sporting neither the sizeable beard of ‘choler’ and of ‘phlegma’, nor the wrinkled, manly face of the sanguine type. The pale skin of melancholy is further accentuated by the trousers he wears, which bear an ominous striped pattern in order to distinguish the ‘hybrid’ melancholic from the three remaining types (Pastoureau 1995:30).

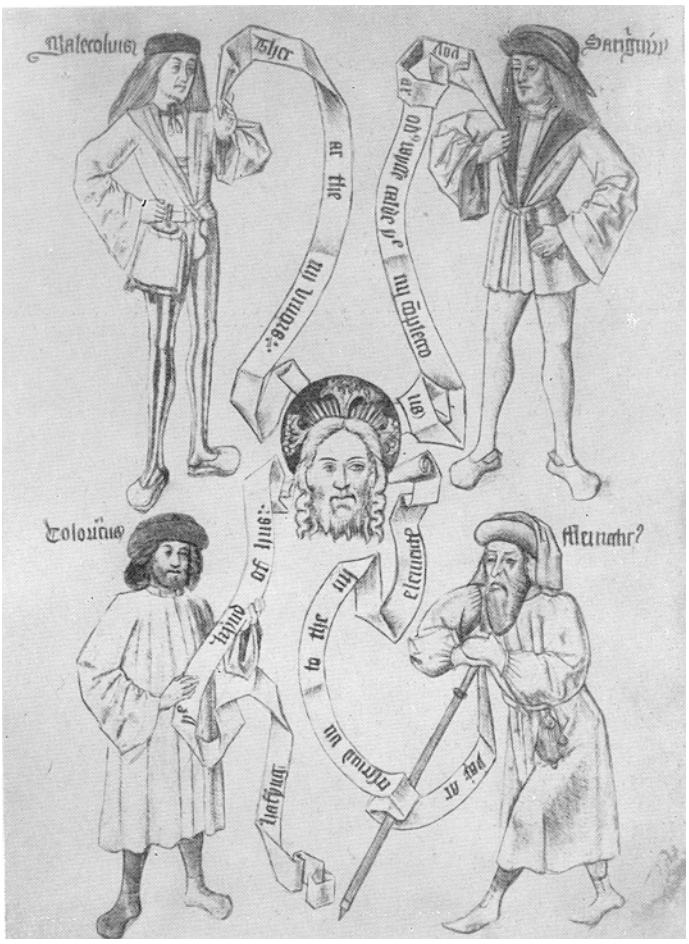

Figure 60. *The Four Temperaments*.
Guild-book of the Barber-Surgeons of the City of York.
Late 15th c. London, British Museum, Egerton MS 2572 fol. 51v.
(Klibanski et al. 1964: Fig. 80)

In *Titus Andronicus*, the analogy of ‘melancholic’ Aaron and the female body seems less apparent from his physical description than from the analogous mode in which his and Lavinia’s voice are being silenced – by means of gagging or tearing out of the tongue. The violent “trimming” of Lavinia, as Aaron sarcastically calls it (5.1.94), and the silencing of Aaron, Chiron and Demetrius reveal *Titus Andronicus* to be principally an allegory of the purity and chastity of the female body. The decline of pure bodies into contaminated hybrids is a central concern of the play. Incomprehensible to modern audiences, Lavinia must be sacrificed by Titus because after her rape she is no more than a “spring […] stained with mud”, a “goodly summer with […] winter mixed” (5.2.168-70)), or in other words, a hybrid body corresponding to autumn or fall, which is generally thought of as the season

corresponding to the melancholic humour.[46] In Renaissance discourse the falling of autumnal leaves is often associated with the "falling sickness" or epilepsy, or with diseases in general (Williams 1994:1.464),[47] and indeed the entire play of *Titus Andronicus* may be seen as corresponding to the archetype Northrop Frye describes as "[t]he sunset, autumn and death phase", which typically features "[m]yths of fall, or the dying god, of violent death and sacrifice and of the isolation of the hero" (Leitch 2001:1453). Lavinia emblemises a diseased autumnal condition which must be purged away by a grieving Titus, who must prioritise his role as the 'father of Rome' over his private interest as Lavinia's father (Miola 1983:198). Faced with what Linda Woodbridge calls a "kind of seasonal miscegenation, a mixing of kinds, a blurring of boundaries that according to Mary Douglas produces pollution", Titus must authorise a "regenerative dismemberment" which eventually ushers in a new and pure Rome (1994:22, 172, 174). Even though brutally ravished against her will, Lavinia – by virtue of her corrupted, hybrid body – represents an obstacle for the making of a new, 'pure' Rome. Consequently, Titus slays her, not in an act of mercy, but in a symbolic act reemphasising the silencing of the female voice which reverberates throughout the play. How the concomitant silencing of female and African voices in *Titus* correlates to a wider dissemination of such ideas in Renaissance culture will be discussed below.

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Following Tamora's orders to "stop" Lavinia's "mouth" (2.3.174, 184), the mutilated daughter is forced to communicate via a "grotesque body language" (Kahn 1997:48), which is only understood with difficulty. The fact that must mimick proper speech in order to be understood reveal her to be an imitator rather than a producer of language. Analogous to Tamora, whose merciless attitude 'unsexes' her true nature ("O Tamora, thou bearest a woman's face – " (2.3.136)), also Lavinia merely mimicks a (male) narrative by Ovid (Philomen's rape), and therefore mimicks a voice rather than creates a voice of her own. Significantly, Lavinia's dumb show later on in the play starkly contrasts with the wit and intelligence she displays in the scene in which she reproaches Tamora for her lustful, vicious life. In a perverted Rome, Lavinia is the one punished for speaking up against an ill, similarly to Miriam in *Numbers*, who steps up to question Moses' hybrid marriage. In both cases, the critical female voices are silenced and replaced with a female body bearing the marks of male language. Figuratively speaking, then, *Titus Andronicus* enacts the 'taming' of female voices, and presents us with a mindboggling escalation of violence which can only be resolved by the forceful invention of male voices rebuilding a new Rome.

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[46] The expression *fall (of the leaf)* as a synonym for autumn first enters the English language in the Renaissance (Hughes 2000:284). The earliest *OED* entry is taken from Roger Ascham's *Toxophilus, the schole of shootinge* (1545): "Spring tyme, Somer, faule of the leafe, and winter" (*OED* "fall" n.2).

[47] Williams quotes the following passage from Thomas Dekker's *Raven*[']*s Almanacke* (1609): "Autumne, the Barber of the yeare, that shares bushes, hedges and trees […] the arrantest begger amongst all the four quarters, and the most diseased, as being alwaies troubled with the Falling sicknes" (1994:1.464).

The ruthless tyranny of the Saturnii rests principally on a rhetoric which successfully overturns the true state of affairs. Tamora's skilfully-acted surprise at the 'discovery' of Marcus and Quintus as the murderers ("How easily murder is *dis*covered!" (2.3.287, emphasis added)) is truly an act of covering up the gruesome deed done by her own sons, who emulate the characteristics Saturninus deliberately ascribes to the fallen sons of Andronicus ("[T]wo of thy whelps, fell curs of bloody kind" (2.3.282-83)). As becomes immediately plain from the moment Saturninus accedes power, this rhetoric may not be contradicted. Speaking against Saturninus, Tamora or Aaron is tantamount to seeking immediate destruction, as Bassianus, Lavinia, and the Nurse must experience. In order to overcome this tyranny, the Andronici take revenge by resorting to just the same weapon of silencing their enemies towards the end of the play. Shortly before Chiron and Demetrius are killed, they are gagged (4.4.160-64), just like Aaron who, when presented to Lucius, is likewise silenced: "Sirs, stop his mouth, and let him speak no more" (5.2.151).[48]

The silencing of Lavinia, of Aaron and of his disciples exemplifies a punishing of 'impertinent' voices which seems to have been systematically inflicted on certain groups during the Renaissance. More specifically, the parallelling of Lavinia and Aaron also points towards an analogy between the repression of women and of Africans in Renaissance culture which has been widely commented on in critcism. In early modern colonial discourse the (non-European) slave is often 'emasculated' and 'feminised' since he occupies a similar status of otherness (Blackburn 1997a:324). This displacing of the female body for the colonial body and vice versa seems to be particularly frequent in the time period from the mid-16th until the mid-17th century. According to D.E. Underdown, legal proceedings against 'unruly' women and their punishment in public was particularly pronounced in the time period "between about 1560 and 1640", as local legal records indicate (1985:119). If there is any relevance to Underdown's argument, which has been broadly supported by subsequent social historians (Ingram 1994:50-51), it would seem that England's patriarchal social structure was seen as being threatened simultaneously from various directions, not just from aliens 'encroaching' on an increasingly globalised England, but also from female voices 'within'.

Not surprisingly, then, the containment of various rebellious voices against the extant political and social hierarchy followed similar modes. One particular gender-specific punishment used in some parts of early modern England between 1560 and 1640 was the so-called 'scold's bridle', or 'branks', "an iron collar with a bit to prevent the victim from talking" (Underdowne 1985:123), which was specifically imposed on 'scolds' or women considered impertinent.[49] Even though legal records do not

[48] For some reason, Aaron is allowed to speak again after being captured at the very end of the play, but most probably only to underscore the viciousness of his character, and the legitimacy of the death sentence he receives.

[49] The *OED* defines *scold*, a loan word from Scandinavian tongues, as initially standing for "a person (esp. a woman) of ribald speech; later, a woman (rarely a man) addicted to abusive language" ("scold" n.1). The verb *to scold* during the Renaissance also means "to behave as a scold; to quarrel noisily, to brawl; to rail at or wrangle with some one; to use violent or unseemly language in vituperation; said chiefly of women" ("scold" v. 1a). The modern meaning of 'chiding' is first documented for the early 18th century.

allow for an accurate assessment of its actual use, it appears that this "kind of chastity belt for the tongue" (Patricia Parker in Boose 1991:197n.48) was sporadically used in Scotland and in Northern England (Underdown 1985:123).[50] Familiarity with this torture instrument, however, was sufficiently widespread to allow for various allusions to it being made in written and visual texts in Renaissance culture. The scold's bridle features for example on some frontispieces of Richard Hooker's influential *Laws of Ecclestiastical Polity* (1593), which display a kneeling woman receiving the Bible in one hand while holding on to a bridle (signifying obedience) in the other (Hooker 1639:frontispiece). As Lynda E. Boose has shown, references to 'bridling a wife's tongue' occur with disturbing frequency in early modern literature (1991:197-98), and also in plays engaging in a commentary on 'colonial subjects'. In Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* (c1587), for instance, Tamburlaine shouts:

> Well abark, ye dogs! I'll bridle all your tongues
> And bind them close with bits of burnish'd steel
> Down to the channels of your hateful throats;
> And, with the pains my rigor shall inflict,
> I'll make ye roar. (Boose 1991:200)

As the vehemence of Tamburlaine's language stresses, 'bridling' someone's tongue is not only psychologically devastating, but also causing excruciating physical pain. The "scold's bridle" or "branks" contained a metal spike which reached far into the back of the throat, thus producing not just silence, but also a blood stream flowing out of the mouth. This, at least, is how a visitor to Northern England in the mid-17th century, recorded in Ralph Gardiner's *England[']s grievance discovered* (1655), witnessed the punishment of wearing such a bridle:

> Io[h]n Wil[l]is of Ipswich upon his Oath said that he this Deponent was in Newcastle six months ago, and there he saw one Ann Bidlestone drove [driven] through the streets by an Officer of the same Corporation, holding a rope in his hand, the other end fastned to an Engine called the Branks, which is like a Crown, it being of Iron, which was musled over the head and face, with a great gap or tongue of Iron forced into her mouth, which forced the blood out. And that is the punishment which the Magistrates to inflict upon chiding, and scoulding women, and that he hath often seen the like done to others. (Gardiner 1655:60.110-111)

According to Gardiner's witness, the large "tongue of Iron forced into her mouth" must have caused excruciating pain, for – analogous to Tamburlaine's "burnished steel" – it "forc[ed] the blood out". The sheer physicality of this horrid silencing is strongly reminiscent of the violence done to Lavinia, from whose mouth issues forth "[a] crimson river of warm blood / Like to a bubbling fountain stirred with wind" (2.4.22-23).

However, just as distressing as the physical pain endured by the Renaissance woman thus 'bridled' must have been the degrading symbolism accompanying such punishment. By this means of torture, the victim was effectively reduced to the status of a domestic animal, being 'muzzled' like a

[50] For a historical assessment of the scold's bridle, see Underdowne (1985) and Ingram (1994). The problem of documenting the use of the scold's bridle in the Renaissance is summarised by Lynda E. Boose as follows: "Since the bridle was never legitimate, it does not appear, nor would its use have been likely to be entered, in the various leet court [i.e. local court] records […]. Because records are so scarce, we have no precise idea of how widespread the use of the bridle really was. What we can know is that during the early modern ear this device of containmnet was first invented – or, more accurately, adapted – a s a punishment for the scolding woman. It is a device that today we would call an instrument of torture, despite the fact – as English legal history is proud to boast – that in England torture was never legal. (1991:196).

beast.[51] This point is also emphasised in the illustration the printers added to visualise the narrative of Gardiner's witness, in which a bridled woman is paraded through the streets like a domestic animal (Fig. 61).

Figure 61. Illustration of Anne Bidlestone driven through the streets, in Gardiner (1655:110) (Ingram 1994:Fig. 3)

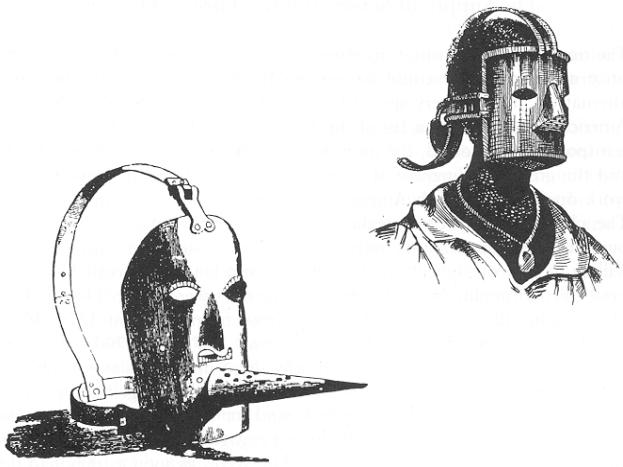

Figure 62. An English scold's bridle (left), and an early modern iron mask used in the Caribbean (right) (Blackburn 1997a:325)

As Robin Blackburn notes in his account of *The Making of New World Slavery*, a mask similar to the scold's bridle was also used on some plantations in the Caribbean, which could likewise be equipped with a thorn on the inside (Blackburn 1997a:324) (Fig. 62). Though Blackburn remains conspicuously vague on the actual dissemination of such torture instruments, the mere acknowledgment of finding such evidence is an important statement per se, which points towards the similar forms of coercion which 'scolds' or 'shrews' (i.e. 'disobedient' women), and mutinous colonious subjects could be subjected to at the time.[52]

The analogy of taming the 'scold' and taming the colonial 'other' may also have been on Shakespeare's mind when writing in short succession *The Taming of the Shrew* (c1590-91) and *Titus Andronicus* (1592).[53] This at least is suggested by a key source Shakespeare used for writing *The Taming of the Shrew*, namely the popular ballad entitled *[A] Merry Jest of Shrewde and Curste Wyfe,*

[51] In the early modern period, the verb to muzzle is often figuratively applied to humans in the sense of "to restrain from speaking; to impose silence on, to suppress the message of", as in Thomas Dekker's Witch of Edmonton: "I'll not confess a mouthful, […]. I'll muzzle up my Tongue from telling Tales" (*OED* "muzzle" v.1.3).

[52] Notice that the evidence Blackburn furnishes is problematic for a study on Renaissance culture, since it belongs to a later period. The illustration reprinted above has been taken from Richard Bridgens' *West India Scenery* […] *from sketches taken during a voyage to, and residence of seven years in* […] *Trinidad* (1836). The illustration of Bridgens (1836) and other 19th-century illustrations of the same torture instrument are reproduced in the on-line collection by Jerome S. Handler and Michael L. Tuite Jr. entitled *The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Americas: A Visual Record* (http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/SlaveTrade).

[53] On the dating of *The Taming of the Shrew* and of *Titus Andronicus*, see Wells and Taylor (1987:109-11, 113-15).

Lapped in Morrelles Skin, for her Good Behaviour (c1550).[54] In the ballad, an obstinate woman is punished by her husband, who beats her with sticks and wraps her in the salted hide of his old horse *Morrell* until the salt in her wounds makes her agree to his demands. When the mother-in-law protests, he threatens to 'tame' her too, upon which she quickly gives in. What is of particular interest within the present discussion the horse's name, which points towards the animal's black colour. *Morelle* either derives its name from a dark, bitter cherry called *morello* in Italian, or from a plant ('nightshade'), both of which were called *morel* in early modern English (*OED* morel n.2, n.3). Either way, the connotation of 'blackness' is unmistakeable, and powerfully visualises how by projecting images of bestiality and Africanness upon the 'recalcitrant' woman, 'othered' bodies become mutually-exchangeable symbols negating 'white' male power.

In *Titus Andronicus*, the lightheartedness with which Titus sacrifices his only daughter for her 'impurity', and the joy with which he triumphs over the gagged Chiron, Demetrius and Aaron, may be read as gestures approving of a conventional silencing of women and colonial subjects which is gradually codified by law in the anglophone patriarchal system. Such an assumption seems also substantiated by the play's foregrounding of a body language which does not rely on tongues, but on colour and outward appearance alone, namely the blush. When Marcus discovers his ravished niece, he is startled to find her "notwithstanding all this loss of blood, / […] / Blushing", with "cheeks […] red as Titan's face" (2.4.29-32). Contrariwise, all feelings of shame are systematically suppressed by those who should blush for their crimes, that is, Tamora and Aaron. "Have I not reason, think you, to look pale?" (2.3.91) Tamora sheepishly retorts when Lavinia and Bassianus reproach her for her amorous liaison with the Moor. Aaron, too, repeatedly ridicules the light-coloured Romans and Goths surrounding him as "whitelimed walls" and "alehouse painted signs" (4.2.97) whose "treacherous hue […] will betray [them] with blushing" (4.2.116). And when an unnamed Goth listens to Aaron's endless inventory of crimes, he incredulously gapes: "What, canst thou say all this and never blush?" (5.1.121).

This exploitation of dark skin as a shield concealing evil thoughts is also a common topos in later plays involving fiendish African characters. In the collaborative piece *Lust's Dominion* (c1599), Eleazer, who was and fashioned after Aaron and is named after the biblical Aaron's son, boasts: "[T]hanks for my face / Thanks that I have not wit to blush" (Tokson 1982:41). A similar passage occurs also in Fletcher's *Knight of Malta* (1616), in which Zanthia, the treacherous black maid, is reproached with the words: "[T]hou baud to mischief. / Do you blush through all your blackness? / Will not that hide it?" (Tokson 1982:41). The condemnation of skin colour as a screen designed to

[54] A transcript of the ballad features on the website of Project Gutenberg at http://www.worldebooklibrary.com/eBooks/Renascence_Editions/jest.html. For a survey of various alternative versions to the ballad, see Brunvand (1966). A selection of short variants in verse are reprinted in an appendix to the second Arden edition (Morris 1981:310-316).

hide any feelings of shame is continued well into the 19th century,[55] and clearly shows how the African physique is continually represented as a defunct, female body. Given the feminine character traits assigned to his physiology, Aaron should truly be regarded as possessing a monstrous female voice.

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As this survey of the multiple identities of Aaron has shown, it appears that the malevolent Moor occupies a multiplicity of states of 'otherness' at the same time. He represents a perversion of the biblical Aaron and excels in the roles of a false prophet, a fallen star, a beastly lover, a pitiless murderer, and perhaps even of a 'cannibal'. In Edward Ravencroft's adaptation, entitled *Titus Andronicus, or The Rape of Lavinia* (1687), Tamora stabs the child Aaron has begotten on her ("Dye thou offspring of that Blab-tongu'd Moor"), upon which A[a]ron reacts with the most astonishing line of the entire play: "Give it me – I'le eat it" (Ravenscroft 1687:55). Exemplifying the behaviour of a true Saturnine anthropophagus, Ravenscroft's A[a]ron displays a sickening melancholy disposition which distances him even from the 'barbarian' Goths. Also, Aaron impersonates Ham, the archetypal mocker of Noah in a double sense. He both cuckolds his spiritual father Saturninus by fathering a child with Tamora, and also castrates Titus by chopping off his hand before collapsing in perverse, Ham-like laughter at Titus' gullibility:

And when I had it drew myself apart,
And almost broke my heart with extreme laughter.
I pried me through the crevice of a wall
When for his hand he had his two sons' heads,
Beheld his tears, and laughted so heartily
That both mine eyes were rainy like to this[.] (5.1.111-117)

Like Ham, Aaron answers Titus' tears of anguish with tears of laughter, and retaliates Titus' wish for a cleansing flood which could restore the honour of the Andronici with a flood of blood. Taking pleasure in inflicting pain, Aaron exults in his role as an Antichrist, and remains unrepentant until the bitter end. The firmness with which Aaron embraces evil until his demise appears quite problematic for any contemporary production of the play. For the modern reader, *Titus Andronicus* emerges as a text reflecting a troubling degree of prejudice which was fairly common in Renaissance plays involving non-European characters (Jones 1965:51-52). However, the foregoing discussion has also led to yet another, much more important insight, namely the realisation that the play does not merely emulate a highly troubling bias, but also teaches the concepts of purity and danger underlying the symbolism analysed earlier on. The play thus very much serves as a vehicle for enculturating its audience by familiarising them with an idiom of uncleanliness which lends itself for othering various social or ethnic groups on the basis of their cultural, physical or somatic difference.

[55] See for example the pro-slavery propagandist John H. Van Evrie, who writes in his notorious *Negroes and Negroe Slavery: The First an Inferior Race: The Latter Its Normal Condition* (1863): "What is there at the same time so charming and so indicative of inner purity and innocence as the blush of maiden modesty? […] Can anyone suppose such a thing possible to a black face? That these sudden and startling alterations of color, which reflect the moral preceptions and elevated nature of white woman, are possible to the negress?" (Jacobson 1998:37).

The danger Aaron poses to 'Rome', whatever this Rome may stand for, is narrated as a parable of power. The sudden rise of Saturninus, Tamora and Aaron is juxtaposed to an equally abrupt collapse of their tyranny towards the end of the play. Aaron's illegitimacy to any high public office is stressed in his own self-description as someone who, although boundlessly ambitious ("I will be bright, and shine in pearl and gold" (2.1.19)), is in actual truth a born slave accustomed to "slavish weeds [i.e. clothes] and servile thoughts" (2.1.18). Having acquired his powerful position by guile and treachery rather than by merit, Aaron quickly tumbles from office once Lucius' army arrives. By the end of the play, he is once more reduced to a "villain" (5.1.30, 5.1.94, 5.3.122), that is, literally, to the status of 'a peasant',[56] or of an "unhallowed slave" (5.2.14), just like his son whom he calls a "thick-lipped slave"(4.2.174). Aaron's sudden rise and fall is also symbolically encoded. As long as he rules over Rome together with the Saturnii, Aaron is likened to a raven (2.3.83) and to a black fly (3.2.66-77), while later on, once he has lost his power, he is constantly described as a fallen angel, or a "devil" (5.1.145, 5.2.5), as he himself confirms ("If there be devils, would I were a devil" (5.1.147)).

The entire reign of Saturninus itself signposts the inappropriate inversion of a 'natural', 'orderly' Rome, for in classical and in Renaissance times, the so-called Saturnalia rites were generally associated with a carnival-like inversion of power structures, as Linda Woodbridge reminds us in her controversial study *The Scythe of Saturn* (1994). Based on Mikhail Bakthin's concept of the carnevalesque, Woodbridge writes:

> [T]he deep structure of all [S]aturnalian topsy-turviness – inversions of class, gender, age – derives from inverting generations through the action of Time, that "true hero of every feast, uncrowning the old and crowning the new" […]. In life's [S]aturnalia, society's weakest members – children – grow up to rule the world, while its strongest members – adults – decline into feeble age: Time makes "the child a man, the man a child" […]. This pattern of life animates ancient rituals of saturnalian inversion as it puts its stamp on oral tales and on literature. […] And a basic Shakespearean plot device is the generational inversion I will call the [S]aturnalia of Time. (Woodbridge 1994:277)

Woodbridge's concept of "the Saturnalia of Time", which Sarah Kofman (1988) sees in the *Merchant of Venice*, also comes to the fore in *Titus Andronicus*, in which the bloody Saturnian reign may only be overcome in due course by a younger generation, i.e. by Lucius, Titus' son. Just like Carneval or the Saturnalia are generally limited to a short period of time, so too Aaron's plotting only remains powerful as long as his lovemaking to Tamora remains undetected among those surrounding him. The interlude of "Saturnalian topsy-turviness" exemplified in Saturninus' reign is intended as a counterpoint to the just patriarchal Rome in which the 'female' desires rampant in Aaron and Tamora are safely contained. The moment when Saturninus' reign seriously begins to crumble is signalled by a passage which is frequently forgotten, namely the courtly visit of Titus' "clown" or fool, who delivers a letter together with two dead pigeons on Titus' behalf. Even though the meaning of the clown's "monstrous villainy" and "proud mock" (4.4.50, 57) is not entirely clear, it is quite telling that the delivery of the dead birds must roughly coincide with the capture of the fallen star Aaron, who in the following scene is handed over as a prisoner to Lucius (5.1.20-39). The appearance of the fool, then,

[56] *Villain* derives from Old French *vilein/vilain*, meaning as much as 'feudal serf', 'peasant cultivator in subjection to a lord', or 'a low-born, base-minded rustic' (*OED* "villain", n. 1).

marks the ultimate end of the vicious "Saturnalia" in *Titus Andronicus*, and heralds the imminent defeat of the evil power invested in Aaron, Saturn, Tamora and her sons.

It would take Shakespeare roughly one entire decade to imagine a "Saturnalia" which take quite a different turn. In *Othello* (1603), we meet an African justly installed in a governing position who is viciously brought to a fall by a "villain" (5.2.320) unworthy of holding such office. Even though the character of Othello in many ways appears as a negation of everything Aaron stands for, he also partly conforms to the stereotyping of Africans and other dark-skinned non-Europeans as disturbed, 'effeminate' human beings. How Othello's fall from a position of power to an emasculated state mimicks the fall of Eve in a colonial setting is scrutinised in the following section.

Othello, or the Fall of Eden

I apprehend the evil which I studie, and place it in me.
(Montaigne. *Essays* Florio 1603:1.20.40)

As the foregoing analysis has shown, Western discourse customarily constructs cultural and somatic otherness by invoking symbols of bestiality, disease and sexual perversion embedded within a larger narrative of a fall. The fallen other is usually characterised by mental, physical or moral corruption bearing the signs of distinct inferiority to the European 'norm'. In *Titus Andronicus*' Aaron, we meet a character who takes great pride in embodying such a fallen condition, and thereby seemingly validates the reliability of his own stereotyping. Contrariwise, in *Othello*, the relationship between the tragic hero's downfall and the symbolic code accompanying his mental and physical collapse is incomparably more complex. At the very outset of the play, Othello is viciously defamed as a 'barbary horse', a 'thick-lipped slave' and an 'erring barbarian', epithets which jar with the noble Venetian Moor entering the stage in the following scenes. However, as the play progresses, there is a rapprochement between the actual Venetian general and the figure of Othello imagined by Iago, until in the final scenes of the play, Othello *does* 'turn Turk', and negates his allegiance to the Venetian state. Even though many of Iago's spiteful allegations remain unfulfilled (Othello never develops the beast-like lechery the ensign keeps insinuating), the African general *is* characterised by distinct 'flaws' reminiscent of the Western typecasting analysed earlier in this study. His gullibility, his melancholic physiology and his intimacy with the exotic clearly situate him outside the European 'norm', and reveal him – to borrow Homi Bhabha's famous words – to be 'almost like a European, yet never quite' (1994:86). This mimicry of male whiteness embodied in Othello is accompanied by a symbolism of the spotted which, though frequently reproduced in stage productions, has hitherto been insufficiently understood and theorised. That Othello succumbs to a Fall akin to Eve's is a well-worn cliché, yet the manifold ways in which the 'melancholic', 'Turkish' protagonist embodies a foreign, effeminate body has gone largely unnoticed.[1] The following reading thus close-reads *The Moor of Venice* as an early variation on the theme of 'black Eve', a myth which negates more hostile fantasies of the exotic male while nevertheless presenting the non-European as a fallen Other.

Over the last four decades, critical opinion on the character of Othello has varied greatly, ranging from commentaries celebrating him as a noble African martyr to readings condemning him as a flawed, ethnocentric construct. Those critics hailing *Othello* as a progressive rupture within a 'racist' tradition have been decisively influenced by Eldred Jones, who closed his pioneering survey of African characters in Elizabethan drama with a comment including the following remark:

In his portrait of Othello, who stands out from the rest of the tradition, Shakespeare is seen as a pioneering dramatist for whom the prevailing idiom was only a starting-point and not a goal. A comparison between Aaron in *Titus Andronicus* and his noble Moor shows two extremes in his work. In the earlier play, he is the young dramatist exploiting the tastes of the

[1] Analogies of *Othello* with the biblical Fall have of course been hinted at in earlier studies, such as in Barthelemy (1994:12), Cohen (1997:2094), or Belsey (1999:81). However, the pairing of Desdemona/Adam and Othello/Eve does not seem to have been proposed before in print.

times; in the later play he is the mature dramatist *flying in the face of tradition – a creator rather than a follower of popular taste* (Jones 1965:132, emphasis added).

There is much to be said in favour of Jones' conclusion. The play's stage history and the history of its criticism suggest that *Othello* did indeed 'fly in the face' of many audiences and readers (at least from the mid-17th to the 20th century) to whom the play appeared too progressive, not to say dangerously subversive. Thus, even though one may censor Jones for his unfounded eulogy of Shakespeare as the "*creator* […] of popular taste" (emphasis added), Jones' optimism, which has set the tone of many classic studies on *Othello* (Hunter 1967, Jordan 1968, Newman 1987) clearly has its justification.

However, even if one argues *Othello* was originally meant to expose and oppose 'racial' bias, there is no denying that the play itself bears testimony to an ethnocentric perspective.[2] Since the 1980s, critics have frequently abandoned Jones' comparative approach by pointing out that to a modern, global and intercultural audience, the play's protagonist must appear as resulting from an "unabashedly ethnocentric" mindset (Vaughan 1994:64). Anthony Barthelemy (1987), for instance, expresses the view that the revolutionary potential of *Othello* always remains within culturally-defined constraints.[3] In addition, Michael Neill (1989) and Emily C. Bartels (1990) have seen Othello as conforming to an ethnocentric construction of exotic Otherness, rather than to an "empirical depictio[n] of the Other" (Vaughan 1994:65). The 1990s, finally, have witnessed the ultimate dismantling of the 300-year-old myth of Othello as "the 'noble Moor'" (Kolin 2002:9), a trend spearheaded by non-European critics such as Ania Loomba (1994), who in an influential article on "Sexuality and Racial Difference" unmasked Othello as a character conjured up by racial and patriarchal fantasies.[4] Also the Nigerian critic S.E. Ogude considers Othello an unacceptable stereotype, "a caricature of the black man" suffering from an "inferiority complex", from a "lack of social refinement", and from an "absence […] of the fine balance of reason and emotion that comes with true 'education'" (Ogude 1997:163). By placing *Othello* within the Western tradition of the grotesque, Ogude provocatively suggests that the play "makes sense as comedy or farce, but not as tragedy", and he contravenes yet another dogma of *Othello* producers by arguing that the play's protagonist should be performed by white actors in blackface (rather than by non-European actors) in order to remain faithful to the ethnocentric bias of the original text (Kaul 1997:xi).[5]

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[2] In this chapter, I consider the *Quarto* (1622) and *Folio* (1623) of *Othello* as one unity and rely on the conflated text as reprinted in the *Norton Shakespeare*. Notice, however, that the assessment of 'racial' bias in *Othello* may vary considerably depending on whether one reads Othello in the *Quarto* or *Folio* version, as Leah S. Marcus has convincingly shown in a recent article (2004).

[3] "However successful Shakespeare's manipulation of the stereotype [of the debased African] may be, Othello remains identifiable as a version of that type" (Barthélémy 1987:161).

[4] According to Loomba, Othello displays the prototypical behaviour of a stock character of the period ("Othello is not merely a black man who is jealous, but a man whose jealousy and blackness are inseparable" (1994:172)). In her view, he cannot aspire to respectability and to a quasi-Venetian status precisely because he is jammed between two different cultures ("So instead of the unified subject of humanist thought, we have a near schizophrenic hero whose last speech graphically portrays the split" (1994:171)).

[5] A similar point is raised by Pascale Aebischer, who feels that the performance of Laurence Fishburn in Oliver Parker's film adaptation (1995) "disturbingly attempts to naturalise racial and sexual inferiority by showing it to be embodied, not performed as on the early modern stage" (2001:69).

Loomba's and Ogude's objections diametrically opppose the earliest extensive critical commentary on the play, Thomas Rymer's *Short View of Tragedy* (1693), in which Othello is condemned for being too valiant and too noble for his ethnicity. Rymer finds fault with a great many things in the play, such as its (partial) deviation from the three Aristotelian unities (Parker 1988, Cannan 2001), yet what disturbs Rymer arguably the most is the characterisation of the three protagonists, who offer a 'perverted' image of an 'orderly' society. "With us", Rymer states, "a Black-a-moor might rise to be a Trumpeter" marrying "some little drab, or Small-coal Wench", but "*Shakespear* would not have him less than a Lieutenant-General" married to "the Daughter and Heir of some great Lord" (Rymer 1693:91-92). Iago is dismissed for being too vicious and too dishonourable for a European ensign,[6] and Desdemona is ridiculed as a "Fool" falling for Othello's fables which have "ma[d]e the Black-amoor White" (Rymer 1693:94, 133). Rymer repeatedly wishes that Shakespeare had modelled Othello more closely on Cinthio's Moor, a rather nasty character entirely lacking Othello's dignity and moral integrity,[7] and his fondness for Cinthio also explains why he should conclude his critical reading with rather misplaced 'morals', which are inspired by if not borrowed from Cinthio's novella.[8] For the ways in which the characters, the plot and other elements of the play differ from Rymer's ethnocentric notion of 'true nature', he uses the term *mimickry*, which in 17th century discourse could be used to refer to an "action, practice, or art of copying or closely imitating" a certain kind of behaviour, speech or manner (*OED* "mimicry", n.1):

> There is in this Play, some burlesk, some humour, and ramble of Comical Wit, some shew, and some *Mimickry* to divert the spectators: but the tragical part is, plainly none other, than a Bloody Farce, without salt or savour. (1693:146)

Rymer condemns the 'mimicry' he sees in *Othello* as a contrived design "to divert the spectators" from the more serious concerns of 'genuine' tragedy. The vocabulary Rymer employs ('burlesque', 'humour', 'comical wit', 'bloody farce') reflects his unwillingness to accept the events on stage as tragedy, similar to the 'comic mode' S.E. Ogude ascribes to the play.

Crucially, Rymer not only regards *Othello* as a flawed work of art, but also as deeply disturbing on a personal level, a sentiment he expresses most succinctly at the end of *The tragedies of the last age consider'd and examin'd* (1678), which prefaces the critical discussion of *Othello* in the *Short View of Tragedy* (1693):

> Othello comes next to hand, but laying my Papers together without more scribling, I find [it] a volum[i]n[ous], and a greater burthen then in dare well obtrude upon you. […] If the Characters I have examin'd are the same I take them for, I send you Monsters enough for one *Bartholomew-fair*: but what would vex a Christian, these are shown us for our own likenesses, these are the *Du*[t]*ch* Pictures of humane kind. (1678:141-142)

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[6] "He is no Black-amoor Souldier, so […] he should be like other Souldiers of our acquaintance" (Rymer 1693:93).

[7] "*Shakespear* alters it [the play] from the Original in several particulars, but always, unfortunately, for the worse" (Rymer 1693:87).

[8] "[T]he Moral, sure, of this Fable [*Othello*] is very instructive. 1. First, This may be a caution to all Maidens of Quality how, without their Parents[']consent, they run away with Blackamoors. […]. Secondly, This may be a warning to all good Wives, that they look well to their Linnen. Thirdly, This may be a lesson to Husbands, that before their Jealousie be Tragical, the proofs may be Mathematical." (Zimansky 1956:132). The first 'moral' correlates to Disdemona's foreboding "that I shall be a warning to young girls not to marry against their parents' wishes" (Honigmann 1997:380), and the third 'moral' parallels the audience's criticism of the Moor "who had believed too foolishly" (Honigmann 1997:386).

In vague allusive tones, Rymer speaks of the play as a "grea[t] burthen" he is afraid to analyse, presumably because he fears that its 'monstrous' characters could offend on account of their unseemly "likenes[s]" to his readership. That the "Monsters" Rymer alludes to refer to Othello, Iago and Desdemona 'mimicking' true nature appears highly probable in the light of the previous discussion. One may conclude, then, that Rymer's statement somewhat theatrically promotes the sequel he duly delivers in the *Short View* (1693), without intending to make any further points. Then again, the most interesting quality of Rymer's statement lies in what it cannot express, and there is a distinct possibility that the unspoken subtext of Rymer's quotation corresponds to the self-same premise underlying this chapter, namely that *Othello* 'mimics' the Fall of Eden.

At the very end of *The tragedies of the last age consider'd* (1678), Rymer promises that „[w]ith the *remaining Tragedies* I shall also send you some reflections on that *Paradise lost* of *Miltons*" (1678:76). This envisaged discussion of Milton was not included in *A Short View of Tragedy* (1693), and it does not seem to have materialised at all (Zimansky 1953:216 n.76:19). That Rymer intended to offer a critical discussion of *Paradise Lost* and *Othello* in one study seems remarkable, and strengthens the case for a 'scriptural' dimension of the play. What is more, in the quote above, Rymer appears concerned that *Othello* may offend the "Christian" (rather than an "English") reader, which once more suggests a common link between the play and a scriptural text. Yet despite a possible subconscious association with the Fall of Man, Thomas Rymer – like generations of critics after him – seems to have been at a loss as to how to decode the symbolism pervading the play. As his famous harangue against the handkerchief manifests ("So much ado, so much stress, so much passion and repetition about an Handkerchief! Why was not this call'd the *Tragedy of the Handkerchief*?" (Rymer 1693:135), the symbolic meanings attached to the object mostly elude him. Chiefly preoccupied with assessing the principal characters' psychological motivation, he pays little attention to the symbolic and allegorical patterns in the play, even though he himself vociferously defends the importance of allegory earlier on in his *Short View of Tragedy*.[9]

Many modern critics have emulated Rymer's approach by prioritising the psychology of the protagonists in *Othello*, treating it as "a tragedy of judgment and an occasion for judgments" (Moschovakis 2002:293) rather than as an allegorical text.[10] However, one may just as well argue that *Othello* was never intended as a platform for passing verdicts in the first place. After all, one key precondition for allowing the reader to judge the protagonists meaningfully is the presence of recognisable motives for their actions, a requirement which is only partly met with the three principal characters. What Coleridge has famously called Iago's "motiveless malignity" precludes a mapping of

[9] "As for the *Fables* which in *Homer*, or on the Stage give offence: The Antients had a thing call'd an *Allegory*, which went a great way towards stopping the mouth of many a pert Observator" (1693:45). Rymer also quotes from Origen's disputation of Celsus: "*Shall we Christians only*, says he [Origen], *be denied the benefit of this Allegory*? *May not we be allowed our Mystery, and Tropological meaning*?" (1693:45).

[10] The same trend of reading *Othello* as a legal text is reflected in R. Chris Hassel Jr.'s article (2001) on "Just Judgment".

his evil nature beyond the common cliché of the archetypal villain (Kolin 2002:25). Even though we may identify possible motives for the grudge Iago holds against Cassio and Othello, such as a wish for social advancement (1.1.8-31), a desire to avenge Othello's supposed adultery with Emila (1.3.368-70, 2.1.282-84), or a yearning to have Desdemona for himself (2.1.278-81), Iago's pleasure at destroying Othello's life moves him closer to the medieval allegorical Vice (Spivack 1958) than to any life-like character. As a being with "no fixed essence" ("I am not what I am" (1.1.65)), he often appears "more [like] a dramatic function than a psychologically realized character" (Cohen 1997:2093), and therefore successfully withstands an exhaustive psychological analysis of his character traits.[11] Desdemona, despite the laurels she has earned with feminist critics for supposedly deviating "from the ideal passive daughter and wife fetishised by the literature of the period" (Munson Deats 2002:242), cannot escape the shadow of her archetype. Following her fatal decision to marry Othello, a decision taken by her rather than by the Moor,[12] she appears too disempowered to exert any substantial influence on either Iago or Othello. Eloquent, yet incapable of arresting the spiral of events leading to her destruction, she remains a passive, hapless victim of Iago's malice, very much like Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus*.[13]

Finally, Othello is *not* – as Eldred Jones claims – "a distinct individual […] typified by [a] fall" reflecting "the weaknesses of human nature" (1965:64), nor is he a non-racialised "Everyman", as Robert B. Heilman suggested in the 1950s (Kolin 2002:14). Despite his benevolence, generosity, honesty and altruism, he displays surprisingly few characteristics which animate him as an individual and situate him outside the exotic. When juxtaposed to the tragic heroes of what A.C. Bradley has called Shakespeare's "Big Four" (Hamlet, Lear, Julius Caesar, Macbeth), the 'grieved Moor' appears rather pale, and displays a stereotypical demeanour lacking the emotional depth and the intellectual self-reflection these other tragic heroes articulate.[14] Even though Othello significantly excels other African and non-European characters, especially in the earlier scenes, he is not allowed to break out of the stereotypical behaviour generally ascribed to non-Europeans in Renaissance anthropology.

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[11] A comprehensive survey of the passages supporting various theories of Iago's motives is offered by Smith (1998:181). The position defended here, that Iago's motives elude identification, is substantiated by several critics according to whom Iago's scheming "lack[s] in both motive […] and goal" (Neely 1994:70). Tellingly, one of the most recent studies on Iago's motives, by Bryan Reynold and Joseph Fitzpatrick, cannot deliver a conclusive answer to the question ("[O]ur transversal analysis defies the sort of holistic conclusion that is characteristic of the dissective-cohesive mode of analysis" (2002:216)).

[12] As Beate Neumeier appositely remarks, Desdemona literally invites Othello to woo her: "She thankèd me, / And bade me, if I had a friend that loved her, / I should but teach him how to tell my story, / And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake" (1.3.162-65).

[13] Her disempowered status after her union with Othello is made brutally plain by A.C. Bradley, who states: "Desdemona is helplessly passive. She can do nothing whatever. She canot retaliate even in speech; no, not even in silent feeling. And the chief reason of her helplessness only makes the sight of her suffering more exquisitely painful. She is helpless because her nature in infinitely sweet and her love absolute. […] [D]esdemona's suffering is like that of the most loving of dumb creatures tortured without cause by the being [s]he adores" (1994:21).

[14] I am reformulating here statements such as Paul A. Jorgensen's point that Othello is "a strong, impressive, but no thoughtful man" (1964:265), A.C. Bradley's assertion of *Othello* being "less great than the others of the Big Four, because the dramatist had not fully succeeded in universalizing his materials" (Everett 1982:101), as well as Jeanette S. White's claim that "[o]ftentimes, Othello is a flawed hero, not unlike a Hamlet, a Lear, a Macbeth, but he is still unable to traverse the ethnic divide successfully. Always like Aaron, he is a fated character whose pigmentation matters greatly. In short, his identity is shaped by his blackness in much the same sense as Aaron's" (White 1998:365-66). In order to make provisions for any possible misunderstanding, I should emphasise at this point that the critique of the character of Othello in this study is by no means intended as a racially-inspired commentary, quite to the contrary. After all, it is the very limitation of Othello's humanity which represents a biased construct worth exposing.

If, as argued above, Othello, Iago and Desdemona more closely resemble stereotypes than fully-fledged characters, there must be limitations to a psychoanalysis of their character traits, and they lie in allegory, symbolism, and myth. The allegorical dimension, which this reading perceives in *Othello*'s affinity to the Fall of Man, endows the plot with meaning. It explains the behaviour of the play's characters as an expression of the semiotic functions allocated to their archetypes in Genesis, and rationalises the actions of the protagonists by attributing them to biblical analogues. The symbolic dimension encompasses enigmatic elements of the play encrypted in a cultural code. The handkerchief, Iago's fig or Othello's melancholy evoke symbolic associations which were once commonly shared during the Renaissance, yet whose meanings have been eroded since the Enlightenment. Arguably, a detailed knowledge of the symbols may not appear necessary for appreciating the play on a literal level; however, failing to understand the symbolic deep structure of some key passages will obstruct a recognition of their significance. Lastly, the myths attached to symbols elaborate what the latter express in condensed form. Thus, the spotted surface of the handkerchief is a symbol which economically compresses a number of intersecting narratives. These myths also situate the entire allegory meaningfully within a wider epistemological framework. If Othello's Fall mimics the Biblical Fall, this may for example also be read as an indirect commentary on the origin and meaning of colour.

The key to unravelling *Othello* as an allegory of the biblical Fall lies in recognising that the play narrates the destruction of Eden with gender roles reversed, Desdemona emulating Adam, and Othello embodying Eve. Already in the opening scene we are introduced to the principal theme of the play, Iago's seduction of Othello/Eve, whose self-defense is decidedly weaker than Desdemona's/Adam's, both mentally and physically. In contrast to her husband, Desdemona firmly withstands the temptations by Iago (2.1.120-67) and by Iago's wife Emilia (4.3.10-104), both of whom attempt to undermine her moral principles. Bearing in mind that a key precondition of the biblical Fall is Adam's absence, Desdemona's refusal to let Othello part to Cyprus without her as well as her longing for Othello's company very much parallel the caution with which (Milton's) Adam opposes Eve's wishes for isolation. Analogous to Milton's Satan, who must apply his utmost skill to overcome Eve, so too is Iago forced to resort to an increasingly elaborate plot to make Othello desire the forbidden fruit, Iago's lethal "fig" (or "honesty").

Perhaps the strongest argument in favour of such a reading lies in what A.C. Bradley has described as the "dark fatality" pervading the play, a feature he attributes to "the absence of direct indications of any guiding power" (Bradley 1994:22), which parallels the sense of predestined fatality characteristic of the Fall of Eden. Given the frailty of Othello/Eve and the superior intellectual power of Iago/the Serpent, the tragic ending is indeed a "foregone conclusion" (3.3.433), as Othello himself points out in a phrase which has in the meantime become proverbial (Vaughan 1994:233). In contrast

to Desdemona, who until her tragic death never moves an inch from her principled self-positioning, Othello's feeble 'melancholic' body cannot withstand Iago's destructive power. Yet also Desdemona, like Adam fatally bound to the weaker opposite sex, is ultimately bound to succumb to the Serpent's evil design. Beginning with the pairing of Adam/Desdemona, Eve/Othello and Serpent/Iago, this chapter explores how the image of the effeminate Othello as a fallen (wo)man maps the play within a multifaceted colonial discourse. How closely colour, gender and physiology may coincide in Shakespeare has already been demonstrated in the analysis of the concomitant silencing of Lavinia and Aaron in *Titus Andronicus*. With *Othello*, the obvious similarities between Othello's melancholic physiology and misogynistic stereotypes of the female body have – despite decades of gender studies – gone miraculously unnoticed, and shall be documented and theorized in some depth. Prior to close-reading the fall of Othello/Eve, though, it seems necessary to demonstrate how a semiotic approach such as the one proposed here can overcome the gridlock and anachronism marring some of the most successful extant critical readings of the play.

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A great deal of criticism on 'Othello and Race' has been concerned with the literal surface of the play at the cost of considering its symbolic and allegorical dimensions. Two cases exemplifying the consequences which may result when literalism shipwrecks on the elusive language of early modern discourse include the tedious debate of Othello's skin colour, and the endeavour to resolve the classic Indian/Judean crux. As elaborated in the Introduction, colour terms and ethnic labels are often too vaguely defined in Renaissance discourse to enable us to pin down ethnicities with absolute certainty. Paradoxically, even if the constant foregrounding of the colour dichotomy in *Othello* seems to point towards a 'dark', sub-Saharan Moor, Othello may nonetheless be geographically situated in North Africa. This is no contradiction in terms, but merely reflects the fact that ethnic stereotypes of the Renaissance were not identical with those popularised in later periods. Consequently, "geographical names can tell us nothing about the question how Shakespeare imagined Othello" (Bradley 1994:32), nor can they reveal how this 'Moor' would have been embodied in Jacobean productions. Furthermore, whereas 18th and 19th century productions featuring an 'Arab' Othello were clearly inspired by a racial hierarchy, the fetishishing of the Oriental type as a distinctly 'nobler' savage did not commence until the Restoration period. Thus, for the Renaissance period, which is temporally situated *[b]efore Orientalism*, as Richmond Barbour has recently shown (2003), establishing a classification of 'racial' preference(s) appears both unfeasible and meaningless. In fact, those attempting to press Othello's ethnicity into racial grids of later periods even run the risk of reproducing an (anachronistic) racial mindset they ultimately intend to oppose.

From a semiotic point of view, the Oriental/African debate appears negligible since the symbolism attached to the various 'tawny' and 'black' Othellos seems to have varied little over time. In many 19th and 20th century productions, Othello was dressed in spotted or striped garb, the usual dress code of non-Europeans in Western iconography, regardless of the protagonist's 'racial' typecasting. In an early 19th century caricature of Ira Aldrige's Othello published in *Tregear's Black Jokes* (Neill 1989:Fig.6), Aldrige is represented by a nasty racially-inspired figure dressed in a spotted toga. Similarly, an illustration of the bedroom scene by Theodore Chassériau (1819-1856) shows a pallid, floodlit Desdemona juxtaposed to an Arabian Othello wearing a striped turban and curiously dotted footwear (Snyder 1988:iii). Likewise, in his performance in 1964, Laurence Olivier wore a bathrobe-like gown bearing massive, vertical stripes (Kolin 2002:cover).[15] Even though these productions offer no clue as to how Othello would have been costumed in the Renaissance, there is reason to believe that a particoloured Othello may have already prevailed at that time. The earliest known sketch of a commissioned costume for an African character, Inigo Jones' drawing of an African nymph for Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blacknesse* (1605) (Fig. 63), reproduces the ominous pattern, too. Wearing a lavishly ornated, colourfully printed garment, Inigo Jones' nymph perfectly blends in with the familiar pattern of the variegated hybrid as we know it from numerous depictions of Africans and Orientals in Western Art.

The striped and spotted patterns attached to the various Othellos in stage history and in the arts often express an ambiguity frustrating any simplistic interpretation. In the case of F.R. Benson cast as Othello in the Globe Theatre production of 1890 (Fig. 64), one may read the leopard coat as a conventional attribute of Africans and non-Europeans intended to 'spice up' an utterly un-African, un-Moorish Othello with an exotic touch. Alternatively, as a symbol of evil girdled across Othello's loins, it may also signal the union between Othello and Desdemona as 'unnatural', or suggest an affinity of Othello with other non-European characters such as Aaron, who was also dressed in leopard skins in contemporary productions (Fig. 65). Lastly, given the undeniably European physiognomy of the actor underneath the dress and blackface, it may also highlight the constructedness of the discourse imposed on the Moor, especially since contemporary productions also use variegated patterns as the typical dress code worn by Iago (Fig. 66). Regardless of the interpretation one chooses, it seems clear that the deciphering of Othello in the productions commented on above is more centrally concerned with the meaning of Western semiotic codes than with subtler 'racial' distinctions. Even though ideologies of 'race' will have decisively shaped the preconceptions of an audience or readership, Othello's 'otherness' would have been conveyed by a cultural code overriding both 'racial' categories of 18th century anthropology as well as the more elusive ethnic distinctions of the Renaissance period.

[15] This tradition of typecasting Othello as a particoloured alien may be seen as continuing to the present, in productions such as the one by Jude Kelly at the Shakespeare Theatre in Washington D.C. in 1997-98. Kelly attempted to invert conventional colour codes by casting a 'black' Iago and a 'white' Othello, yet in order to single out Othello as someone stigmatised for his outward appearance, he was furnished with a prominent "tribal" tattoo on his head (Iyengar 2002:119).

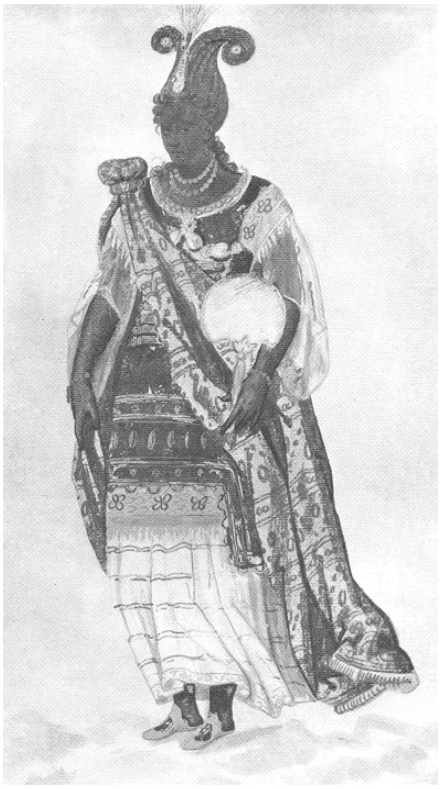

Figure 63. Inigo Jones' costume design for Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blackness* (1605) (Jones 1965:Fig. 2)

Figure 64. F.R. Benson, the Edwardian Actor as Othello (Globe Theatre London, 1890) (Rowse 1978:3.319)

Figure 65. Ira Aldridge as Aaron in the Britannia Theatre (1852) (Rowse 1978:2.14)

Figure 66. Iago wearing a striped cloth. London 1881 (Rowse:3.327)

Another example illustrating how the foregrounding of 'racial' categorisations has hampered the reading of the play is the famous Indian/Judean crux in Othello's final speech (5.2.356). Only seconds before stabbing himself, Othello refers to himself either as a *Judean* or as an *Indian*, depending on whether one follows the Quarto or the Folio text.[16] Traditionally, critics have attempted to reduce the ambiguity of this passage in the hope of furthering an understanding of the text, yet with little success, given that both variants represent viable alternatives. What speaks for *Judean* is the fact that Othello in the following lines refers to his alter-ego as a "circumcised dog" (5.2.364), a reference which makes perfect sense if one bears in mind the Renaissance concept of 'African Judaism' discussed earlier in this study (page …). John Pory explicitly mentions circumcision as a characteristic rite in the Ethiopian empire, where this (partly imaginary) Judaism is situated.[17] However, if one approaches the Indian/Judean crux via its performance, it appears that the two-syllabic *In-dian* blends in much more harmoniously with the metre than the odd trisyllabic *Ju-de-an*.[18] Also, as mentioned in the Introduction, Renaissance discourse often applies the terms *Indian* or *Man of Ind* as a synonym for Africans, a convention rooted in the confusion of the terms *Ethiopia* and *India* in Greek, Roman, and medieval texts (Appendix 1). Moreover, since Othello's self-hatred is directly related to Iago's insinuation that Desdemona's alleged infidelity is related to his skin colour, this latter variant appears just as meaningful as *Judean*, if not even more so, which is perhaps why the second quarto printed in 1630 reverts the First Folio's *Judean* back into an *Indian* (Berger 1994:155).

Since the affinity of *Indian* and *Judean* is orthographic rather than acoustic, the play as enacted on the stage could not have evoked such a double meaning. However, in the transfer from the stage to the page, the editing and typing processes leading to the *Quarto* and to the *First Folio* have given rise to an ambiguity which later speech and spelling conventions will deny. The Othello in early modern typeface merges multiple ethnicities into one. He simultaneously stands for the North African, the sub-Saharan African, the Man of Ind as well as for the Jew. Indeed, one may easily expand this polysemy by thinking of him also as an 'Egyptian' or a Gypsy, a topos which in Renaissance thought seamlessly blends in with African and Oriental stereotypes. As has been pointed out in the introduction, the term *Egyptian* could in the Renaissance very well be used synonymously with *Moor*,[19] and Shakespeare also establishes a link between Egypt and gypsies when comparing Cleopatra's desire to "a gypsy's lust" (1.1.10). The same semantic overlap of African/Egyptian/Gypsy

[16] A third, spurious variant not discussed here is the hypothesis put forward by Halliwell-Phillips, according to whom the "base Indian/Judean" refers to Judas Ischariot, who, like Othello, betrays innocent blood (Mt 27:4). Also the line "I kissed thee, ere I killed thee" (5.2.368) would recall Judas' token of betrayal (Noble 1935:93-94).

[17] See Pory's description of the customs of circumcision in the Ethiopian Church: "Upon the eighth day after their birth, they circumcise all children both male and female. And unlesse sicknes urgeth them to make the more haste, they defer the baptisme of their male children till they be fortie, and of their females, til they be eightie daies old. Circumcision (they say) they received from Queene Maqueda, which went to heare the wisedome of Salomon: and baptisme from Saint Philip, and from the Eunuch which Philip baptized. Yet do they steadfastly hold, that not by circumcision, but by faith in Iesus Christ they attaine unto true felicitie" (Pory 1600:400).

[18] The entire line runs: "Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away" (5.2.356).

[19] See also William Lithgow's *Totall discourse of rare adventures* (1632), which refers to a kind of Moors who are "not blacke Moores, as the Affricans be, but […] a kinde of Egyptians" (*OED* "Moor", n.2).

is also alluded to in Othello's description of the handkerchief as a gift his mother received from a female Egyptian "charmer" (3.4.55).[20] Although lacking the Egyptian charmer's ability to "read / The thoughts of people" (3.4.55-56), Othello remains associated with this shadowy figure by his 'Gypsy'-like itineraries. Bearing in mind these multiple identities, it appears highly questionable whether Othello can be meaningfully reduced to one narrowly-defined ethnic group. Like the Western symbol of Ham, Othello embodies a variety of different nations sharing a similarly unenviable social status in Renaissance culture.

Instead of embarking on a reductive reading which eliminates the play's *double entendres*, this study proposes to explore the polysemy of meanings encoded in a multiplicity of symbols in the text. Thus, rather than striving for reassuringly 'fixed' meanings resting on the illusion of semantic order, this study accepts *Othello* as a disorderly text, and probes the symbolic deep structure underlying its semantic confusion. Conventionally, studies have preferred to remain on the supposedly 'safer', literal surface of the play, looking for analogies on a purely semantic level. Critics have for instance repeatedly voiced the theory that Othello's name might be related to Othoman, the founder of the Ottoman dynasty,[21] despite the facts that Othello's commitment to the Venetian state is unconditional and genuine, and that it is his 'turning Turk' which ushers in his inevitable death. Similarly, there has been some speculation on why *Othello* should stage "a black man as a general in a white army" (Habib 2000:131), an issue already debated at length by Rymer, as shown above. The answer to this question leads – like the Othello/Othoman theory – away from the play, simply because the high military rank of the Moor already occurs in Cinthio's novella, and may not reflect any conscious choice on Shakespeare's behalf at all. Should one want to pursue the issue of Othello's unusual social position any further, the place to do so is the cultural, literary and socio-political environment giving rise to Cinthio's novella in the first place. Few scholars seem to have realised that the character of the Moor in Cinthio itself may be based on a (deliberate?) transformation of a 'white' historical figure bearing the surname *Moro* into a 'proper Moor'. Even though an 'origin debate' on the provenance of Cinthio's Moor is only liminally concerned with Shakespeare's play as such, it is worth following up because it ties in with the symbolic dimension of the play's subtitle, *The Moor of Venice*, by which the play was generally known in the 17th century (Everett 1982:101). Since the significance of the city of Venice has been extensively discussed in Virginia Mason Vaughan's *Othello: A Contextual History* (1994:13-34), the following pages focus entirely on the question of how the subtitle's second component of *Moor* (or *Moro* in Italian) constructs a semiotic web encompassing the play.

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[20] Notice, however, that there are two myths on the origin of the handkerchief. In the final scene, Othello will refer to it as "an antique token / My father gave my mother" (5.2.223-24), an anomaly which has elicited several theories relagarding Othello's trustworthiness (Jones and Stallybrass 2000:206, Platt 2001:144).

[21] The Othello/Othoman-theory is proposed by Lees (1961), Gillies (1994:32, 99), and Davis and Frankforter (1995:493).

In a long-forgotten article published in 1899, Eduard Engel suggested that Cinthio's *Moro* was inspired by a true historical figure, the Venetian military commander Christoforo Moro (1443-1518), who was in charge of Cyprus in 1508 when the island was threatened by the Ottoman empire (Bullough 1957-75:7.195, Argegni 1936-37:2.310). The said Christoforo Moro, who is remembered for example in the diary of the Venetian chronicler Marino Sanuto,[22] was not a 'Moor' except by virtue of his name. In Renaissance Italy, *Moro* was a widespread family name, as it was in many European countries such as England.[23] The fate of this Christoforo Moro, as far as the scant historical records reveal, offers a significant parallel to Cinthio's Moor in that he grieved at the premature death of his wife during his appointment in Cyprus. As Marino Sanuto notes in an entry of 27th October 1508, when "Christof[oro] Moro, appointed lieutenant of Cyprus and elected Captain in Candia [Crete]" returned from Cyprus, he appeared "with beard, because of his wife having died there".[24] That Giraldi Cinthio would have known about this Christoforo Moro when devising the story of the envious Moor in his *Hecatommiti* (1565) appears likely, given the importance of the Moro family in Venice up until the mid-16th century.[25] If Engel's theory proves correct, then this miraculous metamorphosis from an Italian nobleman to a Moorish captain embodies precisely the transgression of a somatic and cultural boundary which Cinthio's novella problematises.

This 'white origin' of Cinthio's Moor does not greatly matter for the appreciation of Shakespeare's play, as it seems highly unlikely that Shakespeare himself would have known about such details of Venetian history. After all, even William Malim's translation (1572) of Nestore Martinengo's brief *True Report of all the Successe of Famagosta*, which describes the successful Venetian siege of the Turkish city in 1571, omits any reference to the tragic fate of Cristoforo Moro.[26] Then again, Shakespeare may have been aware of the fact that *Moro* did not simply represent an ethnic label, but that it could also stand for a family name, like *Moor* or *More* in English (Parker 2000). Such a hypothesis is strengthened by the fact that an influential source printed a decade after *Othello*, Edward Grimeston's translation of Pierre d'Avity's encyclopedic *Estates, empires, and principallities of the world* (1615), contains an extensive entry on a prominent "Christopher Moro", not the governor of Cyprus mentioned above, but an earlier Doge of Venice (1390-1471) who likewise waged war

[22] For an introduction to Marino Sanuto, see Finlay (1980). An interesting article which uses Sanuto as a source for exploring Venetian marriage customs is Labalme and Sanguineti (1999).

[23] Reaney notes that in England the surname *More* or *Moor* initially occurred in its Latinate form *Maurus*, in which it is first recorded in 1169 (1991:313). From there, it entered the English vernacular, as it did e.g. in French (*Maure*) or in German (*Mohr*). Notice that there are also other ethnic labels which turned into family names, such as the so-called 'Saracens', who gave their name to the illustrious Swiss *Sarazin* dynasty.

[24] The original reads: "La matina fo in colegio sier Christofal Moro, venuto luogotenente di Cypri, et electo capetanio in Candia, con barba, per esserli morta la moglie, venendo di Cypri, come per avanti se intese, et referì, etc." (Fulin 1879-1902: VII.656), and translates literally: "Christof[oro] Moro, appointed lieutenant of Cyprus and elected Captain in Candia [Crete], with beard, because of his wife having died there, coming from Cyprus, as understood from above, and reported, etc.". Many thanks to Charles Gallo for providing the translation from the Venessian.

[25] The fame of the Mori family perhaps also explains why still today, the historical legend of Christoforo Moro and Shakespeare's *Othello* are blurred in the commercialising of the citadel of Old Famagusta, the residence of Italian governors in Cyprus before the Turkish invasion, as 'Othello's tower'.

[26] Malim's translation is discussed in passing in Constance C. Relihan's article on "Erasing the East from *Twelfth Night*" (1997:85-86).

against the Turks (Grimeston 1615:538, Argegni 1936-37:2.310). It is possible, then, that Shakespeare had a motive for constantly referring to Othello as a *Moor* (rather than as an *African*, *Blackamoor*, *Negro* or *Ethiopian*), namely to signpost the 'white' social status Othello enjoys in Venice (like the influential *Mori*-family). One may pursue such an avenue even further by claiming that Othello was only meant to be 'black' by name, and was designed to embody European outcasts (such as Jews) who lacked the colour but shared the same discrimination with the 'Moor'.[27]

However, there is much more to the labelling of Othello as a *Moor* than the somewhat speculative link to the Venetian *Mori*-clan suggests. An incredibly rich and staggeringly simple reading of *Moro* is neatly set down in William Thomas' Italian-English dictionary published in the year 1562:

> Moro, a Moore or blacke man, and it signifieth also the mulberie tree
> Moro, I die
> (*Principal Rules* 1562:"Moro"[n.p.])

What William Thomas condenses in two pithy lines is remarkable, for there is hardly a more economical way of mapping out the symbolism and themes pervading the play. The mere labelling of Othello as a *Moor* foreshadows no less than five key elements, (1) 'black dye' or skin colour, (2) death, (3) the mulberry fruit, which identifies the play as an allegory of the biblical Fall, as we shall shortly see, (4) the construction of "I" or the self, and (5) the function of the "eye" and visual properties within all these processes. Since of these the mulberry tree has remained largely unexplored,[28] the following pages shall show how the plant becomes a portentuous symbol of the forbidden fruit in *Othello*, and how this interrelates with a reading of the play as the Fall of Eden.

The mulberry tree, the emblem of the influential Venetian *Mori* family, does not 'distract' from the theme of 'racial' otherness, as has been erroneously presupposed,[29] but actually helps unlock the symbolism revealing the play as a the vision of a non-European fall. In medieval and Renaissance discourse, the mulberry fruit and its tree often stand for the colour black and for dark skin colour. Even though the fruit of *Morus nigra* is purple,[30] it is generally referred to as a black fruit. Incidentally, the *MED* and the *OED* record several instances in which the fruit is named *mor(e) bery*, and the plant is

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[27] Robert B. Heilman has suggested that "*Othello* is not a treatise on mixed marriages, but a drama about Everyman, with the modifications necessary to individualize him" (Kolin 2002:14). Heilman certainly has a point in the sense that Othello must not be limited to his African ethnicity. And, even though this chapter does not pursue this argument any further, it should be obvious that the 'melancholic' Othello may also be rediscovered in supposedly 'diseased' or 'deformed' European bodies of the Renaissance.

[28] See, however, the article by Patricia Parker (2000), which explores the affinities between references to Thomas More, to the mulberry tree, to fools (*moros* in Latin), death (*mors*), customs (*mores*) and melancholy (*morosus*). I would like to thank Margaret Tudeau-Clayton for drawing attention to Parker's work.

[29] "In Othello, however, reference to 'the Moor of Venice' is complicated by Othello's association with the Mori family, whose coat of arms bore a mulberry tree" (Barnhart 2000:676).

[30] Notice that there are two main kinds of mulberry trees. The white mulberry or Morus alba is principally grown as a food plant for the silkworm, whereas *Morus nigra* is cultivated for its fruit. The two kinds are also pointed out in Renaissance sources, as for instance in Stephen Bateman's translation of Bartholomew Anglicus (1582:17.100.303r).

referred to as the *more tree*.[31] The convention of symbolising skin colour by means of the mulberry fruit goes back to classical Roman texts,[32] and resurfaces again in early modern colonial discourse. Thus we find a reference to mulberry-like skin in Edward Guilpin's poem "Of Nigrinia" (1598) (Hall 1995:272), as well as in an obscure masque of 1603 which allegorises America as a woman in "a skin coate the colour of the juyce of Mulberries" (Vaughan 1995:8).[33]

In Christian symbolism, the mulberry tree stands for evil and for destruction, just as the forbidden fruit. The *Physiologus* (2nd c. AD) likens the mulberry to a space of darkness (Seel 1987:70-71), and in Hieronymus Lauretus' *Silva Allegoriarum* (1570:695), the fruit is said to signify the devil because it is first white and gradually darkens until it acquires the colour of sin.[34] Lauretus' reading is also based on two biblical passages which speak of the uprooting and destroying of mulberry trees. According to Luke, the apostles implore Jesus to strengthen their faith, upon which he retorts: "If ye had faith as much as is a graine of mustard se[e]de, and sh[o]ulde say unto this mulbery tre[e], plucke thy self up by the rootes, and plante thy self in the sea, it sh[o]ulde even obey you" (17:6, *Geneva Bible*).

A similar passage, also glossed in Lauretus, occurs in the Psalms, where God's punishment of Egypt is described as follows:

> He destroied their vines with haile, & *their wilde figge trees* [Vulgate: *morus*] with the hailestone.
> He gave their cattel also to the haile, and their flockes to the thunderboltes.
> He cast upon them the fiercenes of his angre, indignation and wrath, and vexation by the sending out of evil Angels.
> He made awaie to his angre: he spared not their soule from death, (but) gave their life to the pestilence.
> And smote all the firstborne in Egypt, (even) the beginning of (their) strength in the tabernacles of Ham.
> But he made his own people to go out like shepe and led them in the wildernes like a flocke.
> (Ps 78:47-52, *Geneva Bible*)

The crushing of the Egyptians (or 'Hamites') and their plants, which are alternatively identified as *mulberry trees*, *fig trees* or *sycamore trees* in English Bible translations,[35] may very well be read as a retelling of *Othello* in a nutshell. The destruction of the Egyptian *sycamores* by an assembly of "evil angels" parallels the tormenting of Othello, the 'sick Moor' and 'Egyptian', by Iago.[36] And indeed, Desdemona too testifies to the significance of the plant when mourning her imminent death by a

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[31] *Mor(e) bery* occurs for instance in William Caxton's *Dialogues* (c.1483), in a textbook for learning French by Giles Du Wes (1532), or in the second volume of a comprehensive reference work on the terminology of plants by William Turner (1548) (*OED* "mulberry", n., "mulberry tree", n.). The term *more tree* appears in the translation of Luke 17:6 in the Wycliffite Bible (*MED* "mor" n. 2). The *OED* editors suspect these variants to be either influenced by the Dutch term *moerbezie* or by the Latin form *morus*, yet it is evident that the *more tree* might just as well have been intended to mean the 'Moorish tree'.

[32] Lloyd Thompson quotes the following Pompeian graffito: "Quisquis amat nigra(m) nigris carbonibus ardet; / nigra(m) cum video mora(m) libenter aedeo" ('Any man who loves a black girl is set on fire by hot charcoal flames; when I see a black girl I am ready and willing to eat that blackberry') (Thompson 1989:108).

[33] Even though in both these cases the mulberry fruit denotes a slightly lighter skin colour than 'black', it is not useful to draw such a differentiation in view of the irregularity with which the Renaissance uses such colour terms.

[34] "[Morus] diabolum dignificat, qui natura prius albus, & rubeus erat, sed culpa factus est niger" (Lauretus 1570:695).

[35] In the passage above, the Catholic *Douai-Bible* (1610) follows the *Vulgate* and speaks of a "mulberry tree", the *Bishop's Bible* follows the *Geneva Bible* and speaks of a "fig tree", whereas the *Authorised Version* (1611) has "Sycamine tree", a synonym for the sycamore tree.

[36] The affinity of the term *sycamore tree* with sickness comes strongly to the fore in the form *Sicomorus*, which is consistently used throughout Stephen Bateman's translation of Bartholomew Anglicus (1582:17.61.320v-r).

valediction evoking the self-same image. The song, originally intoned by Desdemona's mother's "maid called Barbary", is about the maid's lover, "who proved mad / And did forsake her" (4.3.25-27), and its first line runs: "The poore soule sate sighing *by a sycamore tree*" (4.3.38, emphasis added).

However, the analogies between *Othello* and the symbolism of the mulberry tree may be pursued even further. According to William Turner's *Herball* (1562), "[t]he iuice of rype mulberries is a good mouth medicine" (*OED* mulberry n.1), and the same relieving quality is confirmed in John Gerard's *Herball* (1597), which notes that mulberries are "good against inflammations or hot swellings of the mouth and iawes" (1597:125.1326). The fruit's medicinal function may also explain why in Middle High German the term *mulber* is by way of a folk etymology erroneously fashioned into the word *Maulbeere*, or literally, the 'berry of the mouth' (Hermann and Matschiner 1982:396). Bearing in mind this concept of an oral 'medicine', is it easy to see why Iago – seeing Othello cringing in an epileptic fit – triumphantly exclaims: "Work on; my medicine works" (4.1.42). What Iago sarcastically terms 'medicine' is nothing but the volley of abuse and false insinuations which poison Othello's mind.

Significantly, there is yet another biblical analogy in Iago's feeding of poisoned mulberries to Othello can be found in the apocryphal book of the Maccabees, which tells how Jerusalem's leader Judas Maccabeus fed his elephants unripe mulberries to madden them and thus render them more dangerous in warfare: "And to the end they might provoke ye elephants to fight, they shewed them the blood of grapes and mulberies" (1 Maccabees 6:34). The provoking of elephants, an emblem of chastity in Western thought (Hassig 1999:75-76), by means of mulberries uncannily mimics the kind of rage Iago stirs up in Othello, and it is worth noting that Renaissance herbals also attribute to the plant a potential to disrupt the balance of humours in the human body. According to Bateman's translation of Bartholomew Anglicus, the plant is 'unnatural' in the sense that its unripe berries are wholesome, while the ripened fruit corrupts:

> The berries thereof before they be ripe, be colde, and comforteth the stomache, and the more they were ripe, the more hot they were, and also the more sweete and moystie, and many [who] thereof eaten after meate, turneth into corruption, and grieve soone both head and stomacke" (1582:17.100.304v).

Against the backdrop of the tragedy of the 'grieved' Moor, the mulberry's painful corrupting of the human generative parts (the stomach) and the mind (the head) is highly significant, and also points towards the allegorical function of a play as staging the seeking of the forbidden fruit.

Bearing in mind the semantic overlap of the mulberry tree and the sycamore tree with the fig tree, which also prevails in Renaissance natural history,[37] one may also discover a direct link between

[37] See John Gerard's *Herball or General Historie of Plants* (1597), which presents the mulberry tree, the fig tree and the sycamore tree as three different species which have much in common. The fruit of the sycamore tree, for instance, is said to be "as great as a Fig, and of the same fashion, very like in iuice & taste to the wild Fig, but sweeter, and without any graines

Iago's malicious slander against the 'Moor' and Iago's "fig", a term which simultaneously encodes his ruthless nature ("Virtue? A fig" (1.3.316)), as well as his repressed sexual longing ("Blessed fig's end!" (2.1.243)). The fig is of course a highly significant plant and fruit in the scriptures, for, immediately after Adam and Eve "knew that they were naked, […] they sewed figge leaves together, and made themselves aprons" (Gen 3:7). Inspired by the gospel, medieval and Renaissance herbalists sometimes believed that the application of the juice of fig trees onto the genitals "moved [people] to lechery" (Bateman 1582:17.61.291r). Due to this association with the original locus of transgression, the fig tree was sometimes believed to be the tree on which Judas hanged himself (Brewer 1981:426), and also Christ, in an uncanny re-enactment of God's first commandment, curses the fig-tree, when he declares: "No man eate fruit of thee hereafter for ever" (Mk 11:14). Influenced by these passages, Renaissance scholars sometimes imagined the forbidden tree not to be the apple tree, but the fig-tree. According to Henry Buttes' *Dyets Dry Dinner* (1599),

> [s]ome good Scholastique Divines, think the fruite forbidden to be bitten, was not an Apple but a Figge: then surely as our first parents wilfully discovered their ambitious minds by eating of the frute; so very witlesly thought and sought they to cover their shame with an apren of the leaves. (Williams 1994:480)

The same speculation is also reiterated in Walter Ralegh's discussion of "Becanus['] […] opinion that the Tree of Knowledge was Ficus India" (1614:1.4.§2-§3.67-70).

The hypothesis of an affinity of the forbidden fruit with the Indian fig-tree is also topicalised in Thomas Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646:7.1.339) in a passage which is particularly significant since it immediately succeeds Browne's discussion of the origin of skin colour, by far the most extensive treatment of the subject until the 18th century. That Browne's conspicuous topic change from African skin colour to the forbidden fruit was inspired by an association of the Fall with colonial discourse seems highly likely, for Browne is not the only one who situates the fig-tree in exotic lands. Milton, too, in *Paradise Lost* identifies the tree of knowledge as "[t]he Figtree, not that kind for Fruit renown'd, / But such as this day to Indians known / In Malabar or Decan spreads her Arms" (Ricks 1989:9.1099-1103). A similar juxtaposition of the fig-tree, a colonial setting and dark skin colour is also evoked in John Lyly's *Euphues*, in which the fig is concomitantly mentioned with the notoriously 'unwashable' Ethiopian:

> Doe you not knowe that which all men doe affirme and knowe, that blacke will take no other colour? That the stone Abeston being once made hotte will never be made colde? That fire cannot be forced downewarde? That Nature will have course after kinde? That every thing will dispose it selfe according to Nature? *Can the Aethiope chaunge or alter his skinne? or the Leoparde his hewe? Is it possible to gather grapes of thornes, or figges of thistelles?* or to cause any thinge to strive against nature? (Bond and Warwick 1902:190-191)

The propinquity of the fig and the African physique is indeed not surprising, given that both bear strong connotations of sexual lust in the Western tradition. As Gordon Williams notes, Renaissance texts often use *fig* to refer to the female sexual parts, a usage probably deriving from

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or seedes within" (1597:1326). Furthermore, the sycamore is said to be known among botanists as "Ficus Aegyptia" or "Morus Aegyptia" in Latin, as "Aegyptian Mulberie tree" in English, and as "Sycomoro" or "Fico d'Egitto" in Italian (1597:1327). Another source confirming the similarities of *Morus* (or the mulberry tree), *Sicomorus* (of the Sycamore tree) and *Ficus* (the fig tree) is Stephen Bateman's translation of Bartholomew Anglicus (1582:17.61.291r, 17.61.320v-r).

Italian *fica*, which denotes the same (1994:480). Renaissance texts invariably use the fig in curses and insults. *The fig of Spain*, *to give someone the fig*, or quite simply *to fig someone* were rude expressions for sexual intercourse, and were often accompanied by an obscene gesture, consisting of thrusting one's thumb between two fingers, or into the mouth (*OED* "fig", n.(2), "fig", v. (2)).[38] The *fig* is also an insult which frequently appears in Shakespeare, such as in "fig me, / Like the bragging Spaniard" (*2H4* 5.3.110-11), and in *Antony and Cleopatra* the Egyptian temptress terminates her life by exposing herself to the mortal bites of a phallic snake ("Hast thou the pretty worm[?]" (5.2.238)) hidden underneath a basket of figs.[39] Apart from these sexual connotations of the fig, which already occur in the Greco-Roman myths on Venus and Dionysus, the fig also stands for death and disease. According to the *OED*, the *fig* or *ficus* corresponded to an outgrowth resembling in shape the fruit ("fig" n. 3), and *to fig someone away* was a common expression for "get[ting] rid of [someone] by means of a poisoned fig" ("fig" v. 1). Lastly, the fig is also associated with extraordinary physical shapes. Bartholomew Anglicus lists in his encyclopedia the term *ficarius*, which may stand for a gatherer and seller of figs, but also for 'wild men living on figs', fauns, satyrs, madmen, hairy men and other semi-anthropogenic creatures inhabiting the woods where the fruit abounds (Seymour et al. 1975:18.52.1202-03). Fig-eaters, then, very much correspond to the monstrous bodies inhabiting the Southern liminality where Othello traces his origin, and where Iago's rhetoric situates him against his will.

The stunning breadth of symbolic meaning in the fig opens up multiple ways in which Iago's "fig" may be read. On the one hand, the fruit signals the toxic nature of Iago's discourse, which conflates images of the colonial fruit with the tree of evil and of forbidden knowledge. Once consumed and internalised, it not only stirs Othello's jealousy, but also triggers mental confusion, physical collapse, and death. Furthermore, the fig represents one of the many ways in which Iago's conquest of Othello is expressed in sexual tropes, and acts as a reminder that hypersexuality is not localised in Othello, but in Iago. As Anthony Gerard Barthelemy (1994) points out, this inversion of stereotypical roles is a remarkable instance in which the systemic maligning of non-Europeans as lechers is parodied and rectified.[40] Yet, remarkably, once Othello has consumed the fruit, he acts similarly to his frail ancestors in paradise, who use the evil nature of their tempter as a fig-leaf to cover up their own wrongdoing. When heading for Desdemona's chamber, Othello makes himself believe that it is not for himself but for Iago's sake that he is going to perform his deed ("O brave Iago, honest and just, / That hast such noble sense of thy friend's wrong – / Thou teachest me" (5.1.32-34). And,

[38] This sign is also reproduced in Pieter Brueghel the Elder's *Festival of Fools* (c1560), which displays about 60 fools in an outdoor setting, one of whom thumbs his nose and makes a 'fig' (Roberts 1998:1.333).

[39] See also *WIV* 1.3.25-26 ([Pistol:] "'Steal'? Foh, a fico for the phrase!"), or *H5* 3.6.51, 53, 55 ([Pistol:] "Die and be damned! and *fico* for thy friendship"; "The fig of Spain"; "I say the fig within thy bowels"). In *Antony and Cleopatra*, the fruit is also highlighted by those examining Cleopatra's dead body: "This is an aspic's train, / And these fig-leaves have slime upon them such / As th'aspic leaves upon the caves of Nile" (5.2.340-42)).

[40] "That Iago rather than Othello is obsessed with sex is startling because sex is conventionally the black man's preoccupation [in the Western canon]" (Barthelemy 1994a:93).

later on, when Emilia confronts him with his murder, he explicitly shifts all responsibility to his tutor: "*But yet Iago knows* / That she with Cassio hath the act of shame" (5.2.217-18, emphasis added)). The question as to when precisely Othello first becomes aware of the severity of his transgression is crucial for the interpretation of his entire character, and if there is any validity to the analogy of *Othello* to Genesis, then one may suspect Othello's epiphany to take place earlier than he himself is ready to admit. In Genesis, Eve's knowledge is of course twofold, consisting both of an awareness of the snake's depravity as well as of a familiarity with her own frail nature. That in order to learn the truth about himself, Othello must first see through Iago is possible, yet by no means certain. Indeed, upon hearing Emilia's voice, Othello's sudden agitation shows him to run through a series of deliberations greatly at odds with his former, trance-like state ("Shall she come in? were't good? / I think she stirs again. No. What's best to do? / If she come in, she'll sure speak to my wife." (5.2.103-05)). Especially his calculating remark "were't good?" clashes with the plea for ignorance Othello will deliver when facing Emilia and Lodovico, and may be taken as an indication that Othello's disturbing knowledge is already beginning to seep through.

This subtle alteration in the character of Othello is matched by a corresponding change in Desdemona. When miraculously regaining life for a few seconds, Desdemona first accuses Othello of murder ("O falsely, falsely murdered!" (5.2.125)), yet immediately afterwards exonerates him of his crime when answering Emilia's query as to who murdered her with the words: "Nobody. I myself. Farewell" (5.2.132-33). That Desdemona should blame herself rather than Othello for her death may appear puzzling, particularly since just one moment earlier she still maintained: "A guiltless death I die" (5.2.132). Then again, Desdemona's self-reproach seems meaningful if one considers that it was she who brought Othello into her life, who made him woo her,[41] and who wished to elope with him. In Milton's retelling of the biblical Fall, Adam claims that his motives for sharing Eve's fruit were solidarity ("Our State cannot be sever'd, we are one" (Ricks 1989:9.958) and altruistic self-sacrifice ("willingly I chose [...] Death with thee" (Ricks 1989:9.1167)). Quite the same willingness to share Othello's demise marks the language of Desdemona's last line, by which she blames nobody but herself. In *Paradise Lost*, Eve is censured for her foolhardiness, yet cannot be condemned as properly 'evil', given the limitations of her faculties. Quite the same response towards a noble-minded, yet clumsy, gullible Othello/Eve is what the play evokes. Having repeatedly failed to listen to Desdemona's/Adam's voice, Othello has harboured the serpent's voice within himself. He repeatedly likens Desdemona to a "devil" (3.4.40, 4.1.41, 4.1.235, 4.1.239), and mistrusts Emilia, who attempts to save him from Iago's influence by showing him that he is carrying the serpent within himself.[42] Yet once having followed the serpent's lead, Othello's fall is unstoppable. The consumption of the fruit is

[41] "These things to hear / Would Desdemona seriously incline / […] and with a greedy ear / Devour up my discourse" (1.3.148-49).
[42] "If any wretch ha' put this in your head, / Let heaven requite it with the serpent's curse" (4.2.16-17).

indeed a self-consumption, which destroys Othello's self-esteem, his pride in his exotic background and his trust in Venetian values.

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The process by which Iago corrupts Othello by entering his mind is sufficiently understood, and has been scrutinised in a number of studies on the psychology of the play's protagonists. However, that Iago is in the course of the play repeatedly likened to the serpent of Genesis by an intricate symbolic code is a novelty worth expounding in the following pages.

That Iago stands for the diabolical serpent is hinted at several times in the play, most explicitly so in Emilia's defense of Desdemona's sincerety ("If any wretch ha' put this in your head, / Let heaven requite it *with the serpent's curse*!" (4.2.16-17, emphasis added), but also in other instances. Immediately after telling Othello that Desdemona may dislike him for his complexion, Iago tones down the weightiness of his insinuation by expressing the false hope that "Her will, *recoiling* to her better judgement, / May fall to match you with her country forms / And happily *repent*" (3.3. 241-43, emphasis added). The acoustic affinities of *repent* with *serpent* and of re*coil*ing with the snake's *coils* mimicks the manner in which Iago craftily twists and turns discourse. Typically, he will propose a theory and immediately afterwards retract it, thus negating any responsibility for having sowed the seeds of destruction within Othello's mind. This distancing Iago creates between his own persona and his discourse of evil is also achieved by using other characters as mouthpieces for his voice.

The mechanics of this process of corruption appear most distinctly with Cassio. Frustrated at having lost his office, Cassio seeks solace in the company of Iago, while upbraiding himself for his moral lapse during the bout of drinking ("Drunk, and speak parrot, and squabble?" (2.3.260)). Cassio's reference to "speak[ing] [like a] parrot" teems with dramatic irony, for while the audience has long recognised him as a pawn controlled by Iago, Cassio himself remains blissfully ignorant of how he has been turned into a mouthpiece of evil. "O God, that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains!" (2.3.269-70), Cassio exclaims, unaware of the true nature of his idol Iago.

Cassio's dependence on Iago is also manifested in his memorable outburst

> I will ask for my place again. He shall tell me I am
> a drunkard. *Had I as many mouths as Hydra*, such an answer
> would stop them all. (2.3.282-84)

which identifies him as one branch of the Hydra Iago, who like the Lernaean sea-snake speaks out of a cornucopia of heads which keep multiplying the more intensely he is being attacked. This reference to the Hydra is intesting in many respects. In Greek art, the Hydra is usually represented as a snake-like creature with multiple branches and heads whose hybrid status is mimicked by the scales and the

spotted pattern adorning its body (Fig. 67).[43] Interestingly, Heracles, who defeats the monster with the aid of Iaolaos, is often shown wearing a dress with a similar pattern. As an antidote against the Hydra's poison, Heracles supposedly wore the fur of the Nemean lion he wrestled down in the first of his twelve labours (Graf 1998), yet in visual representations, the hairy surface of this garment closely resembles the pattern and the shape of the leopard skins worn by Bacchus and the Maenads in similar Greek artefacts (Fig. 68).[44] The Hydra, then, is not only defeated by a representation of her own hybridity (embodied in a human disguised as a spotted beast), but also by having her own power redirected against herself. Her growth only ceases once Iaolaos brands the stumps of her neck, thus marking or stigmatising her as an outcast. As a symbol of spotted otherness, then, the Hydra literally embodies the power of its own undoing.

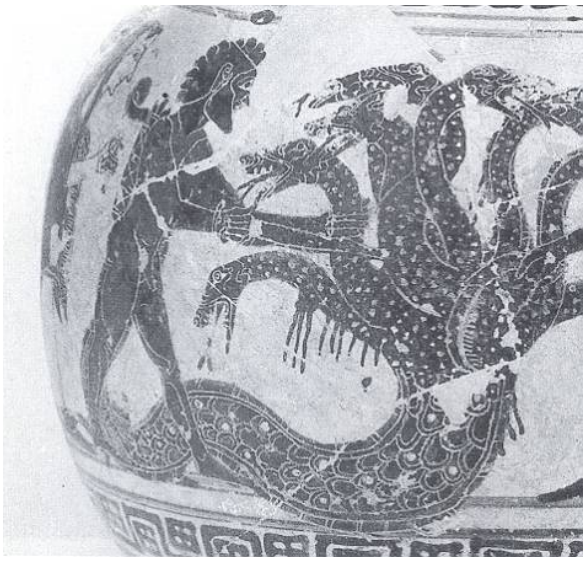

Fig. 67. Herakles fighting the Lernaean Hydra, on a Corinthian vase (c.590 BC) (Boardman et al. 1990: Fig.1992)

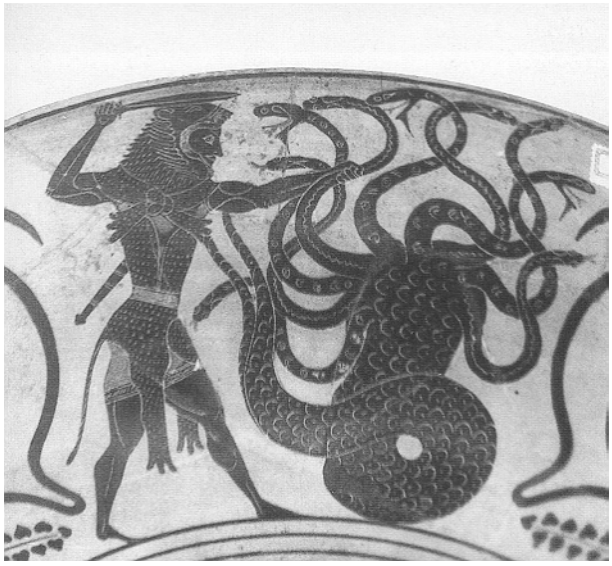

Fig. 68. Herakles fighting the Hydra on an Attic vase (530-510 BC) (Boardman et al. 1990: Fig. 2033)

Due to the great popularity of Heracles in the Christian tradition (Anne 1999), the Hydra regularly resurfaces in the Western visual arts (Reid 1993:2.553-54), and also in medieval and early modern literature. Within a Christian framework, the Hydra retains the negative qualities assigned to it in Greco-Roman culture, and becomes a widely-used symbol of heresy, a usage going back to the Church fathers Jerome and Ambrose (Witek and Rickert 1991:16.908-09). The Anglican Bishop, playwright and pamphleteer John Bale, for instance, uses the Hydra in a similar fashion in an anti-Catholic diatribe of 1546, in which he denounces "[t]hat odyouse hydre and hissinge serpent of Rome" (*OED*

[43] For further illustration of spotted or striped hydras in Greek art, see Boardman (1990:Figs. 1993-94, 2003, 2011, 2016, 2038).
[44] For a Herakles fighting the hydra while clad in hairy lion skin, see Boardman et al. (1990:Figs. 2003, 2004, 2006-08, 2012-15, 2030, 2033, 2037-38).

"hydra", n.2).[45] Yet the Hydra is not only synonymous with a poisonous rhetoric corrupting an individual from the outside, but also with inward corruption. In Chaucer's translation of Boethius, the Hydra stands for a condition of disbelief, in which the removal of one particular doubt merely ushers in even more troubling, nagging questions.[46]

In *Othello*, one can easily see how Iago constitutes both such an outward threat (by denouncing the 'Moor') as well as an inward corruption festering within Othello himself. With Shakespeare, the Hydra is often used as a symbol of political disorder,[47] yet also of mental confusion and of moral depravity. At the opening of *Henry 5*, the bishops of Ely and of Canterbury are euphoric about King Harry, who has unexpectedly matured into a responsible ruler, thereby shedding all sentiments of "Hydra-headed wilfulness" (1.1.36). In *Othello*, the plot takes a diametrically opposed direction, as the governing Moor falls prey to a "Hydra-headed" tempter keen to 'leap into his seat'. The many-headed Hydra controlled by Iago, then, may likewise be understood as the wave of envy building up against the successful lieutenant general, and this is also the allegorical reading of the mythical beast which Edward Topsell offers in his *Historie of Serpents* (1608). Topsell records a legend of a seven-headed snake which was purportedly "brought out of Turky to Venice, & afterwards given to the French king" in the early Middle Ages (1608:201). Although Topsell doubts the accuracy of the legend he reproduces, he nevertheless has a firm idea of what a visitation by such a creature would mean. According to Topsell, "[t]hese monsters signifie the mutation or change of worldy affairs", usually to the worse, and he also claims that "*Lerna* and Hidra signifie […] two kindes of Envye" arising out of human corruption (1608:201-02). Since various kinds of envy may be regarded as Iago's principal motive for abusing the Moor, the reference to the Hydra may be seen as bearing multiple allegorical overtones.

However, Cassio's reference to the many-mouthed Hydra must not be reduced to the classical monster alone. In several medieval bestiaries, the Lernaean Hydra is often confused with the Hydrus (<Gk. *hydros*), a fabulous water-snake characterised by a very peculiar hunting strategy. According to Pliny's *Natural History*, the hydrus is a parasite which creeps into sleeping crocodiles and gnaws its way through its belly, thereby killing it.[48] The same fable is also recorded in Isidore's *Etymologies*, where is runs as follows:

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[45] Interestingly, Thomas Rymer also uses the hydra twice as a symbol of heresy in his *Short View of Tragedy* (Zimansky 1956:102, 110).

[46] "For the matere of it is swich, that whan o doute is determined and kut awey, ther waxen othere doutes withoute nombre, ryght as the hevedes wexen of Idre, the serpent that Hercules slowth" (Benson 1987:Boece IV.pr.4.6.19).

[47] See *1H4* ("Another king! They grow like Hydra's head" (5.4.25)), or in Coriolanus' protest that the senators have unwisely meted out their political power to the rabble of Roman citizens, "hav[ing] thus / Given *Hydra* here to choose an officer" (3.1.95-96).

[48] "[T]he ichneumon [or hydrus] watches for it [the crocodile] to be overcome by sleep in the middle of this gratification [of sleep] and darts like a javelin through the throat so opened and gnaws out the belly" (Rackham 1956:8.37.90).

The *enhydros* is a small animal; it gets its name because it lives in water, specifically the Nile river. If it finds a sleeping crocodile it first rolls in mud, then crawls into the crocodile's mouth; after eating all of the crocodile's inner parts it comes out of the beast, killing it. (12.2.36) [49]

In some versions of the *Physiologus*, the Hydrus – being an enemy of the crocodile, which symbolises evil – is said to stand for Christ, who descended into hell and defeated the devil (Lloyd 1971:105, Witek and Rickert 1991:16.913).[50] In medieval bestiaries, though, the crocodile's evil status does not elevate the hydrus into a goodly creature, quite the contrary. By way of a curious blending with the Learnean water-snake, the medieval hydrus often becomes a many-headed, monstrous beast, as in an illustration of the *Queen Mary Psalter* (c1310-20) (Fig. 69), where it penetrates a mammal-like 'crocodile'.[51] Where the hydrus was depicted with only one head, its monstrous status was sometimes also expressed through a multicoloured coat, as on a 15th century French bestiary (Fig. 70).

Fig. 69. Crocodile and hydrus from the *Queen Mary Psalter* (c1310-20) at the British Library (Royal MS 2B. vii)[52]

Fig. 70. Crocodile and hydrus from a French bestiary (c.1450) at the Museum Meermanno, The Hague[53]

[49] Translation from David Badke's excellent on-line resource *The Medieval Bestiary: Animals in the Middle Ages* (http://bestiary.ca/beasts/beast272.htm). The French translation by Jacques André runs as follows: "L'enhydros est une petite bête ainsi nommée parce qu'elle vit dans les eaux, et surtout dans le Nil. Si elle trouve un crocodile endormi, après s'être roulée dans la vase, elle pénètre par la gueule jusque dans son ventre et meurt en lui déchirant toutes les entrailles" (André 1986:12.2.36). For the original Latin text, see Lindsay (1911).

[50] The analogy is also pointed out in the early 13th century bestiary MS Bodley 764 translated by Richard Barber: "The latter [hydrus] eats the intestines of the crocodile and thus gets out alive and completely unharmed. So death and hell are like the crocodiles, and their enemy is the Lord Jesus Christ. For, taking on human flesh, He descended into hell and destroyed its intestines, and led out all those whom it unjustly detained" (Barber 1993:191).

[51] On the peculiar iconography of the crocodile in medieval art, see Lloyd (1971:105-08).

[52] With kind permission from David Badke's on-line resource *The Medieval Bestiary: Animals in the Middle Ages* (http://bestiary.ca/beasts/beastgallery272.htm#).

The myth of the hydrus, which is reiterated in a large number of medieval Latin English bestiaries in text and image (George and Yapp 1991:195-96), is still preserved in the early modern period. Stephen Bateman in his translation of Bartholomew Anglicus speaks of "a little serpent, that is called Enidros [hydrus]" which "entreth into his [the crocodile's] wombe, and […] renteth his guts, and slayeth him, and commeth out harmles [unharmed]" (1582:18.33.359r-360v), and even Topsell's translation of Gesner's authoritative *Historia Animalium* records the myth as scientific 'fact' (1607:450). In the *Histories of Serpents* (1608), Topsell greatly elaborates on the painful manner in which the hydrus tortures, and eventually kills, the crocodile:

> They [hydri] also watch the old ones [crocodiles] asleepe, and finding their mouthes open against the beames of the Sunne, suddenly enter into them, and being small, creepe down theyr vast & large throates before they be aware, and then putting the Crocodile to exquisite and intollerable torment, by eating their guttes asunder, and so their soft bellies, while the Crocodile tumbleth to and fro sighing and weeping, now in the depth of water, now on the Land, never resting till strength of nature fayleth. For the incessant gnawing of the *Ichneumon* [hydrus] so provoketh her to seek rest in the unrest of every part, herbe, element, trowes, trobs, rowlings, tossings, mournings, but all in vaine, for the enemy within her breatheth throrough her breath, and sporteth her selfe in the consumption of those vitall parts, which wast[e] and weare away by yeelding to her unpacificable teeth, one after [an]other, till she that crept in by stealth at the mouth, like a puny theefe, come out at the belly like a Conqueror[.] (1608:136)[54]

This medieval myth of the hydrus' attack very much captures the mode in which Iago creeps into the mind of the unsuspecting Moor and feeds on his misfortune while killing him from the inside. The play even seems to corroborate such a reading by having Othello, Iago's 'crocodile', allude to the same reptile when censuring Desdemona with the words:

> O, devil, devil!
> If that the earth could teem with woman's tears,
> Each drop she falls would prove a crocodile. (4.1.239-41)

During Desdemona's 'trial', Othello projects the crocodile's false tears, a common symbol of lust and of treachery (Williams 1994:334-35), upon his wife, whose incessant protestations he mistrusts. Yet ironically, it will be the Moor who most accurately emulates the behaviour of the allegorical beast. According to medieval and Renaissance popular lore, "if the Crocodile findeth a man by the brim of the water or by the cliffe, *he slayeth him if he ma*y [can], *and then waepeth upon him*, and swalloweth him at the last" (Bateman 1582:18.33.359r, emphasis added). The analogy to Othello, who murders Desdemona and then bewails her, is unmistakeable.[55]

The theme of Iago's penetration of Othello and his mental cannibalism is also hinted at in the strange description of the handkerchief as a *napkin*, a conventional usage at the time, yet nevertheless a distortion of the original word, which quite simply meant 'a serviette' (*OED* "napkin" n.). When Othello is shown applying the handkerchief to his forehead to relieve himself of pain, the gesture powerfully signals how Othello is internalising a fatal concoction consisting of superstitions of his mother, insinuations by Iago, and the mistrust Desdemona's father and others harbour against him, and

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[53] With kind permission from David Badke's on-line resource *The Medieval Bestiary: Animals in the Middle Ages* (http://bestiary.ca/beasts/beastgallery272.htm#).

[54] The same passage is still reprinted in the revised edition of Topsell printed 60 years later (Topsell 1668:691).

[55] Notice also Stephen Bateman's reference to the crocodile as a "tonguelesse" creature (1582:18.33.359r), which mimics Othello's fallen state during his epileptic fit. Also, Bateman specifies how the crocodile is afraid of snakes and "flieth Serpentes" of every shape, an idea he borrows from Pliny's *Natural History* (1582:18.33.359r).

the suspicion he harbours against Desdemona. 'Hydrus' Iago does not enter Othello via the victim's mouth (as in medieval bestiaries) but via his mind. By describing Othello's skilfully-ornated 'napkin' as a "handkerchief / *Spotted* with strawberries" (3.3.442-43, emphasis added), he acquaints Othello with a cultural code he intends to reproduce in Othello's mind (Newman 1987:156). The pattern of the spotted (as a symbolic representation of hybridity) is the mental map Iago teaches Othello.[56]

Also, one may discover a common denominator in the 'foreplay' the hydrus and Iago enjoy before entering their respective hosts. According to Isidore, the hydrus "first rolls in mud" before it plunges into the crocodile's mouth, a habit which according to some medieval bestiaries enables the parasite to glide down its victim's throat more smoothly (Barber 1993:191). In some other versions, the hydrus is said to cover itself in mud to augment the pain inflicted on the host, allowing it "to harden so that it would be as hard and sharp as a sword" (Clark 1975:119-20). Either way, Iago emulates the hydrus' rolling in mud in every sense of the word. Iago's smearing campaign, setting in from the very first scene, leads to the first challenge of Othello's integrity in front of the signori, which the general-lieutenant unexpectedly wards off. Iago's following insinuations about Desdemona's filthy secrets, however, are not only what will destroy Othello; this coating of imaginary sleaze is also the 'stuff' providing Iago access to an intimacy with Othello which he would otherwise never obtain. Duped by Iago's familiarity with a slander he himself orchestrates, Othello naïvely reveals his interior weaknesses, thus allowing the hydrus to slip into his mind, and to eat its way out of his bowels. Once Iago has left him to die alone in Desdemona's chamber, the residue of the hydrus Iago still sticks to the mind of the Moor, whom Emilia finds to be "[a]s ignorant as dirt" (5.2.171).

The penetration of Othello's mind by Iago's guile is also allegorised in the identification of Iago as a "viper" (5.2.291), a reptile said to be characterised by a monstrous mating and birth reminiscent of the hydrus. According to Pliny, when vipers mate, the male viper puts his head into the female's mouth, who in her ecstasy bites it off. The female viper then bears the eggs inside her until they hatch, giving birth to the young one a day. Since she may bear up to twenty young vipers at a time, those not yet born become so impatient that they burst out of her sides, thereby killing her.[57] Pliny's myth enters medieval bestiaries via the *Physiologus* (Seel 1987 :18-19), and Isidore commemorates it in his folk etymology of the name *viper*, which allegedly means 'birth by force' (André 1986:12.4.10). The viper is also specifically associated with adultery, based on the belief that the lethal nature of its act and conception force it to "indulge its sexual needs in adulterous and unnatural liaisons with the murena, or sea-eel" (Payne 1990:85), and numerous Renaissance sources

[56] In this context, it appears a curious coincidence that the word *napkin* itself originally derives from Middle French *nape*, which in turn is related to the Latin cognate for *map* (*mappa*) (*OED* "nape", n.2).

[57] "The male viper inserts its head into the female viper's mouth, and the female is so enraptured with pleasure that she gnaws it off. The viper is the only land animal that bears eggs inside it; […]. After two days she hatches the young inside the uterus, and then bears them at the rate of one a day, to the number of about twenty; the consequence is that the remaining ones get so tired of the delay that they burst open their mother's sides, so committing matricide" (Rackham 1956:10.82.169-70).

continue to use the viper as a symbol of destructive lust.[58] Bearing in mind this classical and medieval legacy, Lodovico's reference to Iago as a "viper" (5.2.291), then, enforces the Hydr*a*/hydr*us*-like qualities of the Venetian ensign, and shows him to occupy multiple identifications of the Satanic serpent. Hydrus-like, Iago penetrates his victim to kill; viper-like, he relishes the act as sexually gratifying; and Hydra-like, he silences Othello by overwhelming him with a discourse volleyed forth from a mushrooming number of new 'heads'.

The manner in which the Hydra Iago disseminates and multiplies his tongue is evident throughout the play. Many characters parrot Iago's speech to such a degree that their utterances are mistaken for the ensign's. Roderigo's malice against "the thick-lips" (1.1.66) and the "gross clasps of [the] lascivious Moor" (1.1.127) blends in so perfectly with Iago's invective against the "Barbary horse" (1.1.113) that Brabantio holds him responsible for the allegations by his tutor ("This thou shalt answer. I know thee, Roderigo" (1.1.120)). In front of the Venetian senators, it is Brabantio who emulates Iago's voice when questioning whether Desdemona could have genuinely "fall[en] in love with what she feared to look on" (1.3.98), and in the following scenes Iago's most powerful 'head' becomes Cassio. That Cassio mimics Iago's voice rather than speaking his own mind is signalled by his self-identification as a "parrot" (2.3.260). Also, it is Cassio who approaches Bianca with the odd request of manufacturing a perfect replica of the handkerchief he has come across by accident. Cassio's wish to obtain such a copy is rather strange, for he neither seems to know whom the handkerchief originally belonged to (3.4.183-85), nor does Bianca find the request reasonable (4.1.143-50). As Cassio's uncanny desire for reproducing the handkerchief's spots suggests, the discourse attached to Othello's love token assumes a self-perpetuating, destructive quality which gradually affects all those absorbing the ensign's corrupting cultural code.

The lethal narrative Iago transmits via the handkerchief's spots is also encoded in a curious oath Cassio utters before receiving back the handkerchief from Bianca:

> *Enter* Bianca
> Iago Before me, look where she comes.
> Cassio *'Tis such another fitchew! Marry, a perfumed one.*
> [*To* Bianca] What do you mean by this haunting of me?
> Bianca Let the devil and his dam haunt you. What did you
> mean by that same handkerchief you gave me even now? I was
> a fine fool to take it. I must take out the whole work – a likely
> piece of work […] This is some minx's token, and I
> must take out the work. There, give it your hobby-horse.
> [*Giving* Cassio *the napkin*]
> Wheresoever you had it, I'll take out no work on't. (4.1.140-150, emphasis added)

The "fitchew" Cassio refers to is an animal also known as the "polecat" (a member of the weasel family) (Greenblatt 1997:2150n.3) which shares the same semiotic space with the allegorical leopard

[58] For further references to vipers in early modern literature, see Williams (1997:426), who also points out the following lines by Pandarus in *Troilus and Cressida*: "Is this the generation of love: hot blood, hot thoughts, and hot deeds? Why, they are vipers. Is love a generation of vipers?" (3.1.122-24).

or panther. Like the panther in medieval and Renaissance lore, the 'perfumed' fitchew is said to attract by its fragrance, and serves as a common euphemism for female prostitutes (Williams 1994:1069-70, 1997:241-42). Sometimes, though, the myth is modified in the sense that it is not the beast's smell but the visual spectacle of its spotted patterns which attracts other beasts and humans.[59] Quite the same emphasis on visuality prevails in the scene above, in which Cassio's and Bianca's voices must elude Othello's ears, for otherwise he would recognise Bianca as who she is, and see through Iago's scam. Miraculously, though – and this is the point where the play's allegory supersedes its alleged 'realism' – Othello is so intensively glued to the handkerchief ("By heaven, that should be my handkerchief" (4.1.152)) and to Cassio's "smiles, gestures, and light behaviours" (4.1.100) that he is blind to the true identity of the woman. Like the panther's spots, which in medieval allegory place all other beasts (except the snake) in a trance-like state, the spotted 'napkin' creates a visual sensation from which Othello cannot free himself.

A key strategy Iago employs to succeed in the role of Santiago Matamauros, the 'Moor-slayer' (Everett 1982, Griffin 1999), is to disseminate the symbolism of the spotted in different directions. The language with which Iago convinces Brabantio of Othello's lustful nature is similar to the idiom with which he maligns Desdemona in front of Othello. He teaches Othello that women are "as prime ['lustful'] as goats" and "as hot as monkeys" (3.3.408) and convinces Cassio that Bianca is a deceiving "monkey" (4.1.124), thereby exploiting the same metaphor of simian mimicry which early modern discourse commonly imposes on 'incorrigible' non-Europeans, fools, and lechers.[60] Accompanied by Roderigo, Iago first warns Brabantio of the "Barbary horse" (1.1.13) who has abducted his daughter, and later on he uses a similar compound, "guinea-hen" (1.3.312-13), to mock Desdemona in front of Roderigo. Circe-like, Iago keeps transforming those surrounding him by invoking a range of images of bestiality, disease and lust (Doloff 2001), thereby weaving a matrix of false allegations which no-one but himself fully comprehends.

As outlined earlier, the manner in which Othello and Desdemona fall prey to Iago's "rhetorical miscegenation" (Newman 1987:144) parallels the corruption of Adam and Eve in Genesis. The precondition enabling the snake to ensnare Eve is the temporary absence of Adam, or of male authority. What is particularly striking about Othello's social positioning, and what links him with Eve, is the isolated status he occupies. Once severed from Desdemona, his only confidante, who guards him rather than vice versa, Othello exchanges his intimacy with Desdemona for Iago's, and refuses to lend his ear to Desdemona's repeated pleas for reestablishing mutual trust. In Cinthio's novella, the listeners of the frame narrative blame "the Moor […], who had believed too foolishly" (Honigman 1997:386), and quite the same blame is placed on Othello in Shakespeare's drama.

[59] Such a suggestion is for example put forward by Leonardo da Vinci in his personal notebooks (Mac Curdy 1954:2.481).
[60] See the proverb "[a]n ape wilbe an ape, by kinde as they say, / Though that ye clad him all in purple array" in Puttenham's *English Poesie* (1589) (*OED*, "ape", n.1), which rephrases the formula of the unwashable Ethiopian in animal imagery. The semiotic function of the ape in early modern discourse has been discussed in the chapter "The Leopard" (pages …).

Entirely on his own, the Moor of Venice turns out a *moros* (Gk. for 'fool' (Hornback 2001:86-87)) in a process which is well understood, yet whose allegorical subtexts have only marginally been decoded.

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Arguably, what matters most about Othello from a semiotic point of view, and what marks him as a surrogate of Eve, is his effeminate status, which is alluded to in a variety of ways throughout the play. While on a literal level neither Othello's manhood nor Desdemona's feminine traits are ever questioned, the reversal of their gender roles is encoded in Othello's physiology, in the failure of his language, and in hints dropped by different characters. There are for instance two very explicit references to female 'blackness' by Desdemona, both in her reminiscences of the "Barbary maid" (4.3.25), and in a reply to one of Iago's "old fond paradoxes" (2.1.140) by which he entertains – and beguiles – her. Having listened to Iago's witticism about "fairness and wit" (2.1.132), Desdemona jokes: "How if *she* be black and witty?" (2.1.134, emphasis added), upon which Iago replies: "She'll find a white that shall her blackness fit" (2.1.135). Iago's riposte very much sums up the plan he has in store, for Othello will indeed find 'blackness' in his wife, whom he will reject as a "Des*demon*", or literally, a 'black devil'.[61] Othello's effeminate status is also highlighted by the Moor himself, for instance in the emotional language by which he declares himself to be "for ever" Iago's (3.4.482). Immediately preceding the "sacred vow" (3.3.464) sealing his union with Iago, he renounces his love to Desdemona, welcomes "black vengeance, from the hollow hell" (3.3.451), and imagines himself as Eve bearing the serpent's offspring, when exclaiming: "Swell, bosom, with thy freight, / For 'tis of aspics' tongues" (3.3.453-54). In contrast to the highly disturbed, emotional Othello, Iago remains cold and poised when promising to lend the general's body "[t]he execution of his wit" (3.3.469), or his 'masculine' mind.

Cassio also imagines a female Othello when begging Desdemona to make him once more "a *member* of his love" (3.4.108), and continues the theme when asking Bianca to copy the handkerchief clandestinely, lest Othello should "see me womaned" (4.1.190). Cassio's fear of being mocked as 'effeminate' underscores the fact that during the Renaissance handkerchiefs were considered a female attribute.[62] In order to find an explanation for the importance attached to the handkerchief in the play, Karen Newman has turned to the socio-historical context of cinquecento Venice, quoting one case in which the possession of a handkerchief was used as a piece of legal evidence of adultery at court (1994:136).[63] Yet a similar meaning seems to have prevailed in Elizabethan and Jacobean England,

[61] For a discussion of the figure of *Dis* (a Latin synonym for Pluto or Hades), see my chapter on *The Tempest* (pages …). Notice that after Cassio's Fall, the final vowel of Desdemona's name is sometimes omitted, as in 3.1.51 (by Cassio), in 3.3.56 (by Othello), and most memorably by Othello again in: "Ah, Desdemon, away, away, away" (4.2.43).
[62] Psychoanalysts have associated the handkerchief with "the mother's missing phallus" (Newman 1987:156).
[63] "In 1416, a certain Tomaso Querini received a stiff sentence of eighteen months in jain and a fine of 500 liri di piccoli for carrying out 'many dishonesties' with Maria, wife of Roberto Bono. Records from the case describe Tomaso's crime as having 'presumed to follow the said lady and on this public street took from her hands a handkerchief, carrying it off with

for, as Will Fisher (2000) has documented in a recent article, several noblemen of the period chose to have themselves portrayed with a handkerchief in their hands in order to highlight their success in courtship. In a famous incident at the Elizabethan court in 1565, the Earl of Leicester, who was courting Elizabeth I at the time, 'saucily' seized the Queen's handkerchief to wipe his sweaty face in public. Understandably, the incident was ill received by the Queen, and even more so by the Earl of Norfolk, who, an ardent suitor of Elizabeth himself, considered Leicester's gesture as symbolically 'soiling' the purity of the Virgin Queen (Fish 2000:201-03). In *Othello*, we find a similar constellation of Othello being enraged at the loss of his lover's handkerchief to another suitor. However, in the play, the handkerchief is not only Desdemona's but also Othello's, who has inherited it from either of his parents, and still considers it his own rather than Desdemona's. Iago's skill at obtaining Othello's handkerchief, then, may be read as symbolising the mastery he wields over the Moor's effeminate body.

Othello's effeminate status also arises from a juxtaposition of his emotional outbursts to Desdemona's self-possessed demeanour. The impure, corrupted body which is first to fall is Othello's, whereas Desdemona – in spite of her passivity – is far more self-possessed. Desdemona, repeatedly addressed as *madam* (or 'my Adam') by Iago (2.1.124, 4.2.113),[64] argues far more sensibly than Othello after his fall. As Marguérite Corporaal has shown in a recent article, Desdemona first "assume[s] the 'feminine' role of the listener, who 'with a greedy ear devour[s] up" Othello's "discourse", while later on "she assumes the role of the speaker, so that Othello is placed in the feminine role of the recipient of her discourses" (2002:100). The same inversion of gender prevails on the level of body language. Othello's body erupts in the 'unnatural' language of epilepsy and in a "foam[ing]" (4.1.51) from the mouth which aligns him with the Renaissance concept of the female body as a 'watery', 'leaky vessel' (Smith 2000:201, 205). By way of contrast, Desdemona speaks only in the 'natural' trope of the blush.[65] The contrast between the innocently blushing Desdemona and Othello, who on account of his colour is incapable of such a reaction, is pointed out by Brabantio in the first Act, when he characterises his daugher as

> [a] maiden never bold,
> *Of spirit so still and quiet that her motion*
> *Blushed at her self* – and she in spite of nature,
> Of years, of country, credit, everything,
> To fall in love with what she fear'd to look on! (1.3.94-98)

Desdemona's blushes reveal her as a self-reflecting being whose body speaks in "sign[s] of male-defined virtue" (Clarke 1997:119), whereas Othello, who allegedly frightens unacquainted onlookers, lacks both the self-reflection as well as the physical precondition to do likewise. Danielle Clarke's reading of Dedemona's blush as a "male" code is central for understanding the conflict between

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him. As a result of this deed the said Tomaso entered the home of Roberto many times during the day and night and committed many dishonesties with this lady with the highest dishonor for s[i]r Roberto'" (Newman 1994:136).

[64] The same form of address is used by Cassio (2.1.166, 3.3.7, 3.3.29, 3.3.30,3.4.106), Emilia (3.3.3, 3.3.28, 3.4.22, 4.2.100, 4.2.102, 4.2.103) and Lodovico (4.3.3).

[65] On the blush in early modern discourse, see Ross (1979), Tokson (1982:41-42), Wittreich (1990) and Clarke (1996).

Desdemona and Othello, for the entire tragedy hinges on the fact that Othello under Iago's spell begins to mistrust her natural language. He questions whether the blush is genuine, and appears uncertain as to what kind of physical response it encodes, that is, whether it connotes sentiments of modesty or sentiments of shame.[66] Othello's misinterpretation of Desdemona's blush, which Shakespeare borrows from Cinthio's novella,[67] represents a crucial turning point in Othello's misjudgement of his spouse. Subsequently, Othello begins to disbelieve all of Desdemona's protestations of innocence, and, in a strange reversal of fortune, the more honestly she speaks, the more dishonest she appears to him.

The semiotic function of Othello as Eve is also conveyed via metaphors of physical collapse, most powerfully so in the temptation scene in Act four, where – overwhelmed by fantasies of beholding Desdemona 'topped' – Othello collapses on the floor, loses consciousness and starts foaming from his mouth. Othello's epileptic fit, his second one as we are told (4.1.48), links the theme of the biblical Fall with the humour of melancholy, which according to Jean Bodin defines the 'Southern' body. In the Western tradition, melancholy is not only believed to be capable of triggering epileptic fits,[68] but the melancholic humour itself is sometimes also conceived of as a postlapsarian condition. Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), for instance, mythologises the making of melancholy as originating from Adam and Eve's transgression:

> When Adam knew good and, in eating the apple, did evil, black bile rose in him as a result of his transformation. Without the Devil's suggestion black bile does not exist in humans, be they awake or asleep. The sadness and despair that Adam felt upon his transgression originated from black bile. […]. For with Adam's fall the Devil burnt black bile in him, whereby he makes humans at times full of doubt and unwilling to believe. […].[T]he Devil's suggestion often winds itself into black bile and makes humans sad and desperate so that such persons suffocate in their despair and wear themselves out. (Berger 1999:3.8 [110a-b]).

In the quote above, as well as in two similar passages (Berger 1999:3.3 [28a], 3.9 [111b]), Hildegard identifies black bile as a devilish substance haunting the human race ever since the Fall of Eden. This black bile has allegedly been 'burnt' within the human body by means of a process which parallels the 'burning' of colour in the Greco-Roman climate theory. Even though Hildegard of Bingen's impact on the English Renaissance would need to be further substantiated, her writings bear testimony to the ease with which narratives of colour, melancholy, epilepsy and the biblical Fall could be united within a Western metaphysical framework.

As an African and an epileptic, Othello thoroughly embodies Bodin's category of a Southern melancholic, and the same classification is also confirmed by his moody nature and by his sudden outbursts of violence. Similar to the ways in which misogynist discourse lambasts women as infirm in

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[66] Clarke (1996:118), based on evidence borrowed from the *OED*, illustrates the presence of both meanings in Renaissance literature.

[67] With Cinthio, Disdemona, upon being asked to produce the handkerchief, "grew red in the face at the request, and to hide her blushes (which the Moor well noted), she ran to the chest, pretending to look for it. After much search, 'I do not know', she said, 'why I cannot find it; perhaps you have had it?' (Honigman 1997:379-80).

[68] In medieval and early modern medical discourse, epilepsy is seldom discussed in isolation. More often, it is mentioned within the context of the humoral condition defining a person's character. Since the corresponding bodily juice of the epileptic is melancholia, or black bile, epilepsy is frequently considered as just one phenomenon appearing with this particular type (Babb 1951:7, 36).

body and mind, so too melancholic Africans are believed to be prone to physical and intellectual weakness. In a frequently cited poem by Sir John Davies of Hereford (1565?-1618), published in the same year in which *Othello* (1603) was written, the Southern melancholic is characterised as follows:

> For Southward, Men are cruell, moody, madd,
> Hot, blacke, leane, leapers, lustfull, us[e]d to va[u]nt [i.e. 'boast'],
> Yet wise in action, sober, fearefull, sad,
> If good, most good, if bad exceeding bad. (Davies 1603:63)

As Theodore W. Allen has pointed out (1994:1.7), Hereford's vision sketches out the two opposite poles between which African characters on the Renaissance stage are situated, ranging from the cruel, leprous, lecherous and boastful type (embodied in Aaron) to the sober, fearful, sad, well-meaning, moody, but mad kind (mirrored in Othello). However, Hereford's poem may also be read as referring to two opposite mental and physical states residing in one human body. Especially the last line quoted above ("If good, most good, if bad exceeding bad") suggests an alternation comparable to the kind of alternating between extremes which according to A.C. Bradley typifies Othello's behaviour:

> Hesitation is almost impossible to him. He is extremely self-reliant, and decides and acts instantaneously. If stirred to indignation, as 'in Aleppo once,' he answers with one lightning stroke. […] If such a passion as jealousy seizes him, it will swell into a well-nigh incontrollable flood. He will press for immediate conviction or immediate relief. Convinced, he will act with the authority of a judge and the swiftness of a man in mortal pain. Undeceived, he will do like execution on himself. (1994:28)

As Bradley's graphic description underscores, Othello is restless, governed by instinct, passionate to the extreme, and in that sense quite like the image Davies' poem projects. He is "most good", "sober", "wise in action" and "fearefull" ('cautious') at the outset, "sad" and "moody" when reflecting on Desdemona's alleged betrayal, and perturbed by mental and physical illness, though not by leprosy. Then again, Othello is definitely *not* what the poem suggests. Unlike Aaron, he is neither "exceeding bad", "cruel", "lustful" nor "used to vaunt" ('boast'), characteristics which are taken over by Iago in the play. Somewhat simplistically, then, Othello may be defined as an Aaron minus Iago, or as a melancholic creature lacking the sexual appetite and the bestial corruption of Tamora's Moor.

Othello's melancholic physiology is also reflected in his unstable temper which gives rise to gloom and rage in alternation. 'Southerners' are customarily associated with melancholy because a hot climate allegedly draws all the moisture and heat out of their bodies (Tooley 1953:73-75). Southern melancholics are also said to fall prey to delusions and madness on account of the thinness of their blood, and this is also one of the points Bodin raises in his mapping of melancholy in Southern regions.[69] The melancholic characteristics Othello shares already appear in Cinthio's novella, which stresses the Moor's "melancholic" disposition in several instances.[70] Shakespeare harks back to this

[69] As Robert Burton writes in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621): "*Bodine in his 5[th] booke de repub[lica] cap. 1 and [in the] 5[th] cap.* of his method of history, proves that hote countries are most troubled with melancholy, and that there are therefore in *Spaine*, and *Africke*, and *Asia minor*, great numbers of mad men, in so much that they are compelled in all Cities of note, to build peculiar Hospitals for them" (1621:1.2.2.5.108).

[70] In Cinthio, Disdemona twice questions the Moor as to the reason for his melancholy brooding (*maninconico*), first when the Moor deliberates on whether or not to take her with him to Cyprus, and later on when Disdemona senses that the Moor is plotting to murder her. A third reference to *maniconico* occurs in the description "[h]e became quite melancholy", right after the Ensign has voiced his suspicion regarding Disdemona's infidelity (Honigman 1997:372, 375, 380; Cinthio 1608:314, 315, 318).

typecasting of the Moor as the melancholic when Desdemona naïvely asserts that "the sun where he was born / Drew all such humours [of jealousy] from him" (3.4.28-29). Ironically, Desdemona is quite mistaken in her assessment of Othello's humoural constitution, for what has left his body is not jealousy, but the moisture and heat typical of the more benevolent, 'sanguine' type, which constitutes the norm in Renaissance physiology.[71] Othello himself also draws attention to his unusual physical constitution when pointing out Desdemona's physical moisture, which contrasts with his cold and dry constitution ("Give me your hand. This hand is moist, my lady" (3.4.34)). And in Act four, Iago also relates Othello's Fall to his melancholic humour when calming Desdemona with the words: "I pray you, be content. 'Tis but his *humour*" (4.2.169, emphasis added).

This emphasis on Othello's singular physiological constitution is not as unique as it may seem, for several other Renaissance sources record the self-same blending of skin colour, melancholy and epilepsy in non-European characters. In John Webster's *White Devil* (1612), for instance, the female African servant Zanche describes herself in the final act as follows:

I have blood
As red as theirs: wilt drink some?
'Tis good for the falling sickness: I am proud
Death cannot alter my complexion,
For I shall ne'er look pale (5.6.227-31, Prager 1987:277)

Zanche's misplaced pride in her propensity towards "the falling sickness" – a synonym for epilepsy – may have been inspired by Othello's collapse, yet it might just as well have been inspired by other sources asserting such a predisposition among 'Southern' bodies. Probably the most authoritative of these is John Pory's Leo Africanus, according to whom the illness is widespread among African natives, and among women in particular.[72]

That epilepsy constitutes a perfect label for pathologising various sorts of unfamiliar spiritual experiences as symptoms of physical and mental disease (Vitkus 1997:155-56) does not surprise in view of the topoi of illness described in the chapter on "The Leper". However, the affinity between Pory's Leo Africanus and *Othello* seems special in the sense that the two texts have a great deal in common. As Eldred Jones pointed out long ago in his landmark study (1965:22), the historical figure of Leo Africanus himself is one of *Othello's Countrymen*, being a great traveller and an experienced soldier sold into slavery who subsequently converted to Christianity (Pory 1600: "To the Reader"). Furthermore, Pory's Leo also authorises the exceeding jealousy which Western sources often ascribe to Africans and other Southern nations. On the kingdom of Fez, Pory's Leo writes the following:

[71] Compare Desdemona's statement above to the passage in Cinthio's novella, in which Disdemona straightforwardly tells the Moor: "But you Moors are so hot by nature that any little thing moves you to anger and revenge" (Honigman 1997:375).
[72] "This falling sicknes likewise possesseth the women of Barbarie, and of the land of Negros; who, to excuse it, say that they are taken with a spirite" (Pory 1600: 1.39).

All the made-servants in the kings familie are Negro-slaves, which are partly chamberlains, and partly waiting-maids. And yet this Queene is alwaies of a white skin. Likewise in the king of Fez his court are certaine Christian captives, being partly Spanish, and partly Portugale women, who are most circumspectly kept by certaine Eunuchs, that are Negro-slaves. (Pory 1600:163)

According to Pory, the most jealous of all Africans are those permanently deprived of deriving pleasure from the sexual act themselves, namely the Eunuchs.

This self-same concept of the embittered, envious lecher occurs frequently in descriptions of non-Europeans, and it is often presented as an explanation for the sudden eruptions of destructive violence which allegedly govern such individuals (Smith 1998:179-80). In Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* (3rd c. AD), translated into English in 1569, the Egyptian robber chief Thymis tries to kill his captive Chariclea, whom he loves, when being in danger of a rival band (Underdowne 1569), and in *Twelfth Night*, Orsino states:

Why should I not, had I the heart to do it,
Like to th' Egyptian thief, at point of death
Kill what I love? – a savage jealousy
That sometimes savours nobly. (*TN* 5.1.113-116, emphasis added)

In *Othello*, the Moor's sudden urge to kill the person who has suppposedly derived great pleasure from her alliance with Cassio should likewise be read against the backdrop of an unconsummated marriage. Although the play neither confirms nor denies the consummation of their marriage, the play evokes a sense of emotional distance and lack of physical intimacy which points towards the same kind of 'savage' jealousy growing out of a deep frustration about having 'lost' the fruit before having tasted it. This frustration is greatly amplified by Othello's melancholic temper, which under the influence of Iago, becomes his greatest liability.

The fact that epilepsy or the 'falling evil' also represents a frequent Renaissance euphemism for orgasm (Williams 1994:1.462-63) brings to mind the frequently voiced allegation of an affinity between non-European bodies and sexual promiscuity. Yet Othello's collapse symbolises *anything but* an orgasm. On the contrary, it constitutes an anti-orgasm, or a collapsing of his physical and mental health, as he is faced with the allegation that his union to Dedemona is an unnatural act, and that the 'natural' union is consummated has been someone else.[73] The one who physically enjoys Othello's collapse on stage is Iago, whose joyful "Work on; my medicine works" (4.1.42) reflects the ensign's exultation at Othello's gradual decline. Iago's "I'll pour this pestilence into his ear" (2.3.232) represents the temptation of the Moorish hero as a variation of the murdering of Hamlet's father, who likewise died of a "leperous distilment" (1.5.64). In both cases, knowledge of incestuous relations is deeply disturbing and gives rise to similar sentiments of loss of honour and revenge. However, while Hamlet the Dane makes great efforts to verify these rumours, and deliberates at great length before

[73] The same negation of physical love reoccurs in Act five, in which Othello takes Desdemona's life in the self-same bedroom where her adultery had allegedly taken place. Othello's "Put out the light, and then put out the light" (5.2.7) invokes a double reference to the sexual act, with the candle being a common phallic symbol (Williams 1994:194) and death symbolising the sexual union which Othello and Desdemona never enjoy during the play.

taking any action, Othello's rashness, stirred up by Iago, prevents him from gaining the same kind of insight into the nature of the crime committed against him and his kind.

Othello's Fall, however, is not merely represented as a mental or physical collapse, but also as a breach of social conventions, as a failure of language and as a negation of cultural codes. Othello's gradual descent from his initial eloquence into "rhetorical barbarism" (Smith 1998:186) is already foreshadowed at the very outset of the play when Iago denigrates the general as "Barbary horse" (1.1.113). Iago's memorable phrase has multiple subtexts, referring simultaneously to bestial otherness, to the African continent, as well as to a faltering human voice. By conceptualising Othello as a barbarian, Iago resorts to the oldest known mode of segregation in the Western tradition, which has been instrumentalised for othering various ethnic, religious and social groups on the basis of their imperfect knowledge of a certain cultural code. The topos of the barbarian has been historicised in depth for its dissemination in antiquity (Hall 1989, Romm 1992), early Christianity (Kimber Buell 2002, Kimber Buell 2004, Merrils 2004), the Middle Ages (Goffart 1988, Gillett 2002), early modern discourse (Hendricks 1992), and for its usage in Shakespeare (Smith 1998, Deats 2003). In order to fully grasp the complex manner in which the concept of barbarism is situated within *Othello*, it will be necessary to look at the making of this stereotype, and to acknowledge the ambiguous attitude certain early modern sources share towards the constructedness of such a concept.

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According to philologists, the 'barbarian' is an ancient concept traceable both to Sanskrit *barbaras* as well as to Greek *bárbaros*, where it refers to the incomprehensible 'stammering' or 'babbling' of non-Aryans or non-Hellens, respectively (Barnhart 1988:76).[74] The term has often been suspected to be onomatopoetic in origin, being designed to mimic and mock the speech of alien ethnicities, as in the *Iliad* (Murray and Wyatt 1999:2.867). Whereas with Homer *barbarians* could still be conceived of as idealised people inhabiting a distant utopia (Romm 1992:48-81), the concept seems to have acquired its derogatory connotations during the Persian Wars, after which it became an umbrella term for all those ignorant of Greek language and culture, including the Romans (Hall 1989).[75] For Hellenes, though, *barbarian* was not merely a term of abuse, but also a status concomitant with social realities. Barbarians, for instance, were excluded from the Olympic Games, from certain religious ceremonies, and from attending plays, which according to Edith Hall were important in shaping Greek stereotypes of 'barbarity' (1988:5).[76] Eventually, the Greek/barbarian polarity was taken over by the Romans, who

[74] Notice that the "desire to mock or belittle a foreign language", which underlies the making of the term barbarian, is also reflected in the expression Hottentot, which "similarly means 'stutterer' or 'stammerer', 'originally applied to the people on account of their clicking speech', later deteriorating to 'a person of inferior itellect or culture'" (Hughes 2000:281).
[75] In her landmark study, Edith Hall claims that "it was the fifth century [BC] which invented the notion of the barbarian as the universal anti-Greek against whom Hellenic – especially Athenian – culture was defined" (1988:5).
[76] The one single play Hall associates most closely with ethnic self-identification is Aeschylus' *Persae* (472) (1988:5).

applied the concept to all non-Roman and non-Hellenic nations, such as the Persians, Carthagenians, Parthians, Scythians, Celts or Gauls, thereby establishing a more universal distinction between centre versus periphery, state versus lawlessness, and culture versus savage life.

Significantly, the generic term *barbarian* also seems to have been projected onto certain geographical regions, and thereby acquired the status of an ethnic category. With several Greek, Hellenic and Roman geographers, *barbaria* is the official term for the Somali Red Sea coast.[77] The labelling of the coastline as 'barbarian' was most probably sparked by the indigenous name for the Somali city *Berbera*, recorded by Pliny the Elder and others (Huss 1997:443), which must have appeared like a verification of the 'barbarous' status of its inhabitants. The self-same projection was reiterated during the Middle Ages in the labelling of the North African coast as *Barbary*, probably based on the fallacy (or the deliberate insinuation) that the Berber tribes inhabiting these territories were self-professed 'barbarians'.[78] In numerous medieval and early modern texts, the Greco-Roman concept of the barbarian constantly overlaps with that of ethnic Berbers, who were othered on account of their somatic and cultural difference, and even more so because of their Muslim faith.[79]

That the Greco-Roman topos of the Barbarian is transported via medieval culture into the Renaissance period is generally accepted among critics and historians today, and documenting the rhetorical success of the concept in colonial discourse does not pose any difficulties (Gillies 1994:4-18, Vaughan 1997:169-71, Smith 1998:171-72, Smith 2000:252). Far less known, however, is the fact that the Western tradition also possesses texts which relativise the othering of the 'barbarian', or which even question the validity of the concept as an ontological category. One such source is Paul's letter to the Colossians, according to which Christ's salvation will erase all worldly distinctions in humankind: "[T]here is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all, and in all" (3:11). And in the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul even presents 'barbarism' as a displaceable condition which lies in the eyes of the beholder:

> There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, *I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me*. (1 Cor 14:10-11, emphasis added)

According to Paul, then, *barbarism* does not necessarily denote an actual state of corruption, but may reflect the ignorance on behalf of the speaker classifying others as 'barbarians'. A similar dual perspective on the concept of 'barbarism' is offered by John Pory in his rendering of Leo Africanus, where the coining of the term is explained as follows:

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[77] The term is used thus in the anonmyous *Periplus Maris Erythreae* (1st c. AD), or with the Alexandria-based Christian geographer Cosmas Indicopleustes (6th-c. AD) (Huss 1997:443).

[78] Notice that the labelling of the North African coast as *barbary* has not yet been sufficiently researched. However, it seems that the Renaissance link between the indigenous term *berber* and the Greek concept of the *barbarian* builds on a folk etymology (Room 1987:40, Smith 2000:254).

[79] The merging of the Greco-Roman barbarian with the Barbary coast is reflected in the confusing references collected in the *MED* ("barbar", "barbarie", "barbarien", "barbarin") and in the *OED* ("barbarian", "Barbary").

The tawnie people of the said region were called by the name of *Barbar*, being derived of the verbe *Barbara*, which in their toong signifieth to murmur: because the African toong soundeth in the eares of the Arabians, no otherwise then the voice of beasts, which utter their sounds without any accents. Others will have Barbar to be one word twise repeated, forsomuch as *Bar* in the Arabian toong signifieth a desert. For (say they) when king *Iphricus* being by the Assyrians or Aethiopians driven out of his owne kingdome, travelled towards Aegypt, and seeing himselfe so oppressed with his enimies, that he knew not what should become of him and his followers, he asked his people how or which way it was possible to escape, who answered him *Bar-Bar*, that is, to the desert, to the desert: giving him to understand by this speech, that he could have no safer refuge, then to crosse over Nilus, and to flee unto the desert of Africa. And this reason seemeth to agree with them, which affirme the Africans to be descended from the people of Arabia fœlix. (Pory 1600:1.5-6)

Pory proposes two possible origins of *barbar*, one being the conventional explanation that the term represents an onomatopoetic approximation of the unintelligible babbling of a foreign tongue. The second, and more interesting, theory likens the *barbarians* to a persecuted people fleeing the Egyptians and finding refuge in the desert. With Pory, the barbarian is on the one hand imagined as the inarticulate, beast-like alien, while on the other hand he may also personify the unjustly persecuted victim. The first of these positions accepts 'barbarism' as a valid hermeneutic category, while the second point of view locates barbarism in the 'civilised'. In the plays analysed in this study, Shakespeare appears at times ambivalent as to which of these two theories he ought to endorse. In *Titus Andronicus*, the destruction of Rome is clearly fostered by alien forces intruding into Rome, yet nonetheless, the captured Goths justly reproach the Romans for behaving "barbarously" towards them.[80] In *Othello*, a similar relativising of the concept of barbarism may be perceived in Iago's condemnation of Othello as a *barbary horse*.

In early modern zoology, the term *barbary* is attached to a great range of beasts, such as to the *Barbary hen* (or turkey), to the *Barbary falcon* (falco pelegrinoides), to the *Barbary ape*, or to the *Barbary horse* (*OED* "Barbary", n. 4b). Interestingly, some of these creatures are truly related to 'Barbary', such as the Barbary falcon, which inhabits North Africa. However, this is not the case with the *Barbary hen* (also called *turkey-hen* or *turkey*), which obviously lacks such a geographical link. Being neither related to the African continent nor to the East, the labels *barbary hen* and *turkey* loosely suggest an exotic provenance which is not further defined (*OED* "Barbary", n. 4b, Davis and Frankforter 1995:494). Significantly, John Pory also seems to acknowledge the fact that the label *barbary* is often notoriously ill-defined, when writing the following about "the horse of Barbarie":

This name is given unto the Barbarie horses throughout Italy and all Europa, bicause they come foorth of Barbarie, and are a kinde or horses that are bred in those regions; *but they which so thinke are deceived: for the horses of Barbarie differ not in any respect from other horses:* but horses of the same swiftnes & agilitie are in the Arabian toonge called throughout all Egypt, Syria, Asia, Arabia Felix, and Deserta, by the name of Arabian horses [.] (Pory 1600:339, emphasis added).

Pory's most significant line – "for the horses of Barbarie differ not in any respect from other horses" – clashes with the unabashed ethnocentrism of Iago, who roots Othello's presumed difference in his ethnicity. Iago presents Othello as a being without an intelligible voice, and in response to Iago's tireless plotting, Othello himself will reject Italian civilisation ("Do ye triumph, Roman, do you

[80] "Was never Scythia half so barbarous" (1.1.131) Chiron exclaims at the ceremonial slaughtering of Tamora's first-born son Alarbus, whose "limbs are lopped" in much the same way as the Goths will later revenge themselves on the Romans. His brother Demetrius immediately chimes in with: "Oppose not Scythia to ambitious Rome" (1.1.132), thereby further questioning the moral superiority Romans claim their own (Vaughan 1997).

triumph?" (4.1.116)) and situate himself outside the cultural Venetian code. By demonstrating the ease with which Iago instrumentalises the concept of the 'barbarian' to destroy loyalty in Othello, the play questions the meaningfulness of the dichotomy of the civilised versus the barbarian, and deliberately departs from the unequivocal manner in which Cinthio's novella earmarks the Moor as a 'barbarian'.[81]

Othello's alteration from an eloquent, enculturated Venetian to a 'barbarous', or 'stammering', "malignant and turbaned Turk" (5.2.362), which has been magisterially analysed by Ian Smith (1998), is expressive of a fundamental change equivalent to an inversion of gender. In Renaissance discourse, *Turk* bears unmistakeable undertones of effeminate male beauty and of homosexuality (Williams 1994:1438-39). The sexual innuendo is even more explicit in the form *to turn Turk* (*ADO* 3.4.47), which simultaneously evokes fears of 'going native' while also situating moral decay in the pleasure of an illicit 'turn' or sexual act (Williams 1994:1440-41). In *Othello*, it is not simply Othello's metamorphosis into a Turk which marks him as an effeminate creature, but also his Eve-like gullibility, his unstable physiology, and his affinity to the "Barbary maid", whose fate Desdemona remembers as follows:

My mother had a maid called Barbary.
She was in love, and he she loved proved mad
And did forsake her. She had a song of willow.
And old thing 'twas, but it expressed her fortune,
And she died singing it. That song tonight
Will not go from my mind. (4.3.25-30)

Having been forsaken by a 'mad' Othello, Desdemona is reminded of Barbary's history because it matches her own fate. Then again, the maid Barbary also stands for Othello, who believes himself betrayed, and this double identity of Barbary is further underscored in Desdemona's song, which links the maid both to her and to Othello:

The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree,
Sing all a green willow.
Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,
Sing willow, willow, willow.
The fresh streams ran by her and murmured her moans,
Sing willow, willow, willow.
Her salt tears fell from her and softened the stones,
Sing willow' – (4.3.38-45)

Desdemona's fondness for the Barbary maid "sighing by a *sycamore* tree", and the acoustic affinities of the o-sound in "willow, willow, willow" with Othello's own moaning identify the passage first and foremost as a commentary upon the 'sick Moor'.

The agonies Othello endures very much resemble Barbary's, and also the "salt tears" shed by the maid act as a reminder of the false "woman's tears" which according to Othello "prove" Desdemona "a crocodile" (4.1.240-41). As pointed out earlier, the reference to the crocodile identifies

[81] "When the Signioria learned of the cruelty *inflicted by the Barbarian* upon a citizen of Venice, they ordered the Moor to be apprehended in Cyprus and to be brought to Venice, where with many tortures they tried to discover the truth" (Honigman 1997:385, emphasis added).

Othello as the victim of hydrus-like Iago, yet the animal also foreshadows Othello's and Desdemona's death. According to Renaissance zoology, the crocodile is a reptile which "has no tongue" (Topsell 1608:129),[82] and the absence of a voice is what unites Othello (Iago's crocodile) and Desdemona (Othello's crocodile) in the final outcome of the play. Iago's vision of a *barbarian*, or an unintelligible stranger, which he projects onto Othello already at the outset of the play, then, materialises in Othello's own transformation into a stranger negating Venetian cultural codes and into a murderer of Desdemona's and his own voice. Having corrupted Othello's mental faculties, Iago can leave the Moor to his own devices, for "his own courses will denote him so / That I may save my speech" (4.1.276-77). What Iago calls Othello's "courses" (or 'actions') are likewise his 'curses', for the Moor's deeds further only Othello's and Desdemona's destruction, being determined by "the serpent's curse" (4.2.17).[83]

Iago's curse consists in kindling in Othello a desire for forbidden knowledge – the experience of the sexual act, or death – by making him believe in a code of the spotted which distorts nature in a similar way as the biblical serpent misrepresents the truth about the forbidden fruit to Eve. Once taught to recognise the handkerchief as a 'spotted object' proving Desdemona's infidelity, Othello is obsessed with regaining control over it, since its loss implies an intolerable physical intimacy and a mutual exchange of human fluids between Desdemona and Cassio. For Othello, it is the thought of Cassio "wip[ing] his beard" (3.3.444) with the handkerchief which causes him to stutter for the first time ("If it be that – " (3.3.444), and Othello's stammering is all the more understandable if one reads this "beard" as Geoffrey Chaucer uses the term in his notorious *Miller's Tale*, where it stands for the pubic hair kissed by Absolon, the unsuccessful suitor (Benson 1987:1.3734-3743).[84]

In his distressed imagination, Othello enlarges the handkerchief into a bedsheet onto which he projects his nightmares of adulteration (Boose 1975:58-59):

> Strumpet, I come.
> Forth of my heart those charms, thine eyes, are blotted.
> Thy bed, lust-stained, shall with lust's blood be spotted. (5.1.36-38)

Just as Desdemona's transgression merely takes place in Othello's imagination, so too the handkerchief's 'spots' (if that is what the strawberries are) do not embody evil *per se*, but only attract a web of evil insinuations once accommodated in Othello's mind ("[t]here's magic in the web of it" (3.4.67)). Originally "dyed in mummy" (3.4.72), that is, soaked in "[f]luid drained from mummified bodies" (Greenblatt 1997:2143n.5), the handkerchief confers death upon those absorbing its patterns in

[82] See also Stephen Bateman's translation of Bartholomew Anglicus: "The Crocodile is a beast, & dwelleth in the river Nilus, & among beasts of the land he is tonguelesse, and onelye his over iawe moveth" (1582:18.33.359r).
[83] The reference to "the serpent's curse" (4.2.17) is dropped by Emilia in conversation with Othello in the scene immediately following Iago's references to Othello's self-defeating "courses" (4.1.276).
[84] For an introduction to Chaucer's influence on Shakespeare, see Thompson (1978). A superb reading of *The Miller's Tale* as a rewriting of the mockery of Ham is offered by Friedman (1992). Williams (1994:86-87) draws attention to several Renaissance texts where *beard* contains the same connotations, among them the passage in *Twelfth Night* in which the clown wishes Viola (whom he mistakes for a boy) a beard, upon which she retorts: "I am almost sick for one, though I would not have it grow on my chin" (3.1.41-42).

their minds, as Othello does when pressing it against his forehead to alleviate the headache Cassio's supposed cuckolding causes him. That very gesture, the 'imprinting' of spots upon Othello's dark skin, also marks the onset of his self-hatred, which Iago carefully nourishes by declaring his love to Desdemona an 'unnatural' liaison.

The imaginary 'marking' of his forehead which Othello performs by drying his brow ties in with the topos of the marked forehead as an indicator of guilt which is well established in the Western tradition, stretching from God's marking of Cain in *Genesis* to Jonathan Smith's branding of the immortal Stuldbruggs in *Gulliver's Travels*. Shakespeare makes use of the same symbolism in *Hamlet*'s closet scene, where according to Hamlet Gertrude's marriage to Claudius "takes off the rose / From the fair forehead of an innocent love / And sets a blister there" (3.4.41-43), a figure of speech which may reflect the practice of branding prostitutes in such a manner during the 16th and 17th centuries. In colonial discourse, the branding of human skin is associated with leprosy and thus with skin colour, as in James Shirley's *Imposture* (1640), in which Juliana laments her fall into prostitution with the words:

I see my leprosy unveil'd; that sin,
Which, with my loss of honour, first engage'd.
My misery, is with a sunbeam writ
Upon my guilty forehead. (Dyce 1833:5.3, emphasis added)

By pressing the handkerchief against his forehead, Othello performs a 'burning' of his mind which conflates all the symbolic associations of spots (bestiality, disease, lechery, hybridity, unnaturalness, barbarism) with his skin colour, and ushers in the destructive gloom of the fallen Othello.

For Othello, then, the handkerchief becomes a *fetish*, in the original sense of the word, that is, an object used in witchcraft,[85] or a token heralding a self-fulfilling prophecy. Convinced that the spotted pattern must be read in the way Iago has taught him, Othello fails to grasp the tragic irony underlying its symbolism. It does not stand for breach of trust, for faith or sinfulness, but it represents a token of death. In contrast to *Titus Andronicus*, in which handkerchiefs are used for what they are originally meant for, that is, to dry tears ("Thy napkin cannot drink a tear of mine, / For thou, poor man, hast drowned it with thine own" (*TIT* 140-41)), the handkerchief in *Othello* actually *produces* sorrow, a flood of tears, and streams of blood. Its consummation in Othello's mind foreshadows his moral fall, his physical decay and his inescapable death, analogous to Eve's tasting of the forbidden fruit.

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[85] The term derives from Portugese *feitiço*, a derivation of the verb 'to make', and was first used for magical objects Portuguese sailors encountered on the African coast (Blackburn 1997a:15).

If there is any validity to the semiotic reading offered above, then *Othello* foreshadows a reinterpretation of the Fall as we find it expressed about two centuries later in a series of written and visual texts which conceptualise humankind as originating from a 'white' Adam and a 'black' Eve. In 1735, the naval surgeon John Atkins rather boldly declares that "tho' it be a little Heterodox, I am persuaded the black and white Race have, ab origine, sprung from different-coloured first Parents" (Jordan 1968:17), and further descriptions and depictions of a mixed pair also feature in Hugh Henry Brackenridge's satirical novel *Modern Chivalry* (1792) or on the door panel of the Alte Apotheke in Calw, Germany (1770-80) (Fig. 71). That these texts unanimously locate colour in Eve rather than in Adam perfectly agrees with Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman axioms on human conception, notably with Aristotle's theory of form and matter, which insists that perfection and 'gendering' are solely male, and nurturing and corrupting of the newborn exclusively female (Page 1953:1.18.724b).[86]

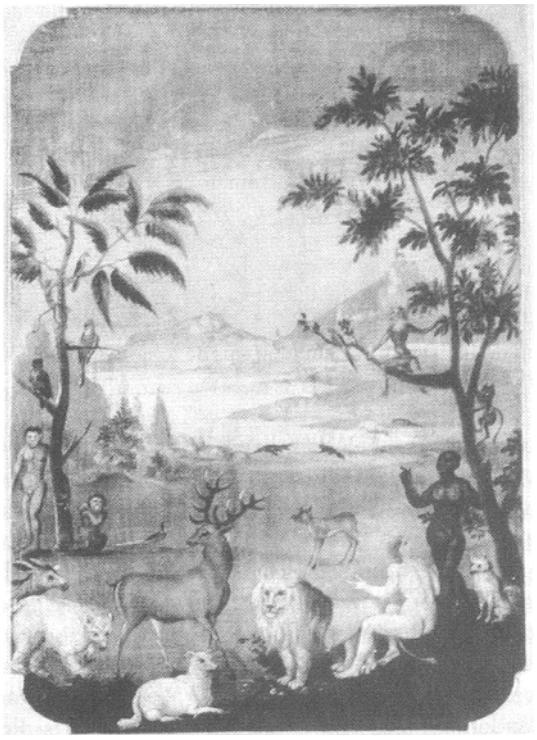

Figure 71. Door panel at the Alte Apotheke, Calw (Germany) (c.1770-80)
(Sollors 1997:Fig. 9)

The myth of a black Eve may of course be read in two ways, namely both as a 'feminisation' of colour, as well as a 'colouring' of the female. By portraying Othello as an effeminate Moor, the play implicitly negates the concept of aggressive, lecherous, bestial blackness which prevails in a wide range of early modern sources. *Othello* thus very much negates the notorious 'black rapist myth', which is alluded to both in *Titus* and well as in *The Tempest*. Also, whereas in *Titus Andronicus*, Aaron's colour possesses a rampant, epidemic quality which threatens to corrupt entire Rome, Othello's colour is only harmful to himself and to those near him. While Aaron, the "breeder of these

[86] The myth of Black Eve has been discussed more extensively in the chapter "The Lecher" above (pages ...).

dire events" (5.3.178), triggers the Fall of Rome by sowing (male) seeds of destruction in the bodies of Tamora and Lavinia, the 'effeminate' Othello breeds self-destruction within himself.

This 'colouring' of the female body the play stages may be perhaps best understood in the context of the turbulent socio-political changes taking place at the time when *Othello* was written. The year 1603 was an important year of transition, not only politically, but also socially.[87] According to D.E. Underdown, gender issues became more pronounced during Queen Elizabeth's last years, and reached their climax at the point of succession:

> In 1603 the leet jury noted 'the manifold number of scolding women that be in this town'; a year later they complained of their constant 'misdemeanours and scolding', lamenting that the mayor was 'daily troubled with such brawls'. (Underdown 1985:119)

What Underdown describes as an "epidemic of scolding", or a torturing of 'rebellious' women, "coincided with a marked increase in the incidence of other typically female offences against good order", such as witchcraft (Underdown 1985:120). Read against the backdrop of Underdown's theory, *Othello* gains even further significance and topicality, since it is principally concerned with the silencing of female voices on several levels. Brabantio's 'death' sentence to the disobedient Desdemona (1.3.59), the throttling of Desdemona, and the silencing of the 'effeminate', epileptic Moor by Iago's 'medicine' may all be seen as commenting on the increasing prosecution of women around the time of succession.

As Kim Hall (1995) notes, 1603 also saw the emergence of a changing attitude towards the exotic among the Jacobean court. The 'Virgin Queen' Elizabeth, an emblem of England's purity, was replaced by a Scotsman married to a Danish princess, whose strange customs also included displays of live exotic bodies in commissioned pageants such as Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blackness* (1605). This intensified exhibiting of non-European physiques in Jacobean England may also have reflected wide-ranging changes in England's socio-cultural environment, and it is indeed striking that the years between 1599 and 1603 witnessed the publication of a number of works substantially contributing to the theorizing of colour in Renaissance discourse.[88] Taken together, these texts not only document England's colonial experience in greater detail than earlier works, but also display a more mature and more critical attitude characterised by a questioning of hierarchies, of epistemological beliefs and occasionally even of Eurocentrism as such. By lending Othello a voice, Shakespeare recreates a perfect embodiment of what Homi K. Bhabha has described as "the reformed, recognizable Other", who in relation to the European self "is almost the same, but not quite" (1994:86). While in relation to Aaron, Othello stands out as a noble, heroic figure, he remains in absolute terms still a fallen creature.

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[87] For an introduction into the various political and social changes, see the popular history of the year 1603 by Christopher Lee (2003).

[88] See Richard Hakluyt's second edition of his *Principal Navigations* (1599), John Pory's translation of Leo Africanus (1600), John Florio's translation of Montaigne's *Essays* (1603), Philemon Holland's translation of Plutarch's *Moralia* (1603), not to mention minor works such as George Abbot's *Briefe description of the whole worlde* (1599) or John Davies' *Microcosmos* (1603).

As a victim to Iago's 'rape', the figure of Othello authorises a 'milder' variant of the reading of colour as disease, and ushers in a decidedly warmer attitude towards colour and ethnicity than subsequent periods will allow. The foregoing analysis of *Othello,* then, questions the stereotype predominating in *Titus Andronicus* and throughout the Elizabethan era, thereby launches a debate which will be continued even more intensely in the following years, as the English explore and settle in the Western hemisphere.

The Tempest, or the Fall of Ham

[Prospero:] We are such stuff / As dreams are made on
(4.1.156-57)

For more than a century, there has been considerable controversy over the geographical and ideological mapping of *The Tempest*. Ever since Octave Mannoni used the play as a platform for debating attitudes towards Western colonialism and imperialism in the 1950s, Prospero and Caliban have remained figureheads of a wider political debate. In modern stage and film productions, Caliban has become inextricably linked with oppressed colonial subjects, much to the dismay of a dwindling number of traditional scholars who vociferously oppose what they consider a hijacking of Shakespeare by postcolonial 'ideologues'.[1] While postcolonial theory has become the main critical school determining the shape of scholarly discussions of the play at present,[2] the geographical setting of Caliban's 'wondrous Isle' has remained as elusive as ever. Conventionally, critics have associated *The Tempest* with the New World, most memorably so Peter Hulme, whose *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean* (1986) historicises *The Tempest* as an episode within the European discovery, conquest, exploitation and destruction of that entire region.[3] However, since the 1990s, critics have argued for a range of alternative settings where similar kinds of early modern colonial desire are at play. In diverse interpretations Caliban has been rediscovered in the unfree European peasant (Patterson 1989), in the European wild man (Baert 1997), in the 'Barbarian' or North African (Brotton 1998, Smith 2000),[4] in the 'savage' Irishman (Burnett 2002:125-26), or in the Islamic 'Oriental' (Fuchs 2004:284-85). As the burgeoning number of new publications on the subject suggests, the "great confusion over the racial identity of Caliban" (Franssen 1997:26) is unlikely to be resolved.

The fervour with which Caliban's ethnicity is currently discussed not only mirrors the general importance attached to *The Tempest* in Renaissance studies, but also bears testimony to the degree to which scholars have been obsessed with the literal surface of the play. In the light of the previous findings of this study, such a line of enquiry appears problematic for two reasons. First of all, the geographical and ethnic terminology of early modern texts is notoriously unstable and hence a poor foundation for establishing Caliban's 'origin'. Secondly, Renaissance codes of purity and danger

[1] See e.g. Brian Vicker's assertion that "[i]f modern critics want to denounce colonialism they should do so by all means, but this is the wrong play" (Lindley 2002:39), or Harold Bloom's attack against "weak misreading[s]" in which Caliban, in Bloom's eyes "a poignant but cowardly (and murderous) half-human creature", has been turned into "an African-Caribbean heroic Freedom Fighter" (1998:662).

[2] For a comprehensive survey of the shift in critical debate in the wake of Octave Mannoni's *Prospéro et Caliban* (1950), see Skura (1989).

[3] According to Leslie Fiedler, "America was on Shakespeare's mind" when writing the play (Fiedler 1973:167), and also the editors of the third Arden edition, Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan, feel that the play has "unquestionably […] American overtones" (1999:47). See also Ania Loomba, who believes that Caliban represents an Elizabethan perception of "the American West" (2000:205). The case of the Carribbean has recently been reiterated by Jonathan Goldberg in his *Tempest in the Caribbean* (2004).

[4] Notice that an African Caliban was already suggested in the introduction to the first Arden edition by Morton Luce (1905:xxxvi).

transcend geographical space, and rely on a symbolic deep structure which exists independently of its signifier. No matter where Prospero's 'brave new world' was initially meant to be situated, the making of the "freckled whelp" Caliban follows a common formula compatible with a variety of geographical settings. Thus, instead of making a case for one particular geographical area where the play is supposedly located, it appears more meaningful to situate *The Tempest* within an intercontinental space such as the one Paul Gilroy has described in his groundbreaking study on *The Black Atlantic* (1990). Gilroy conceives of the Atlantic as a discursive space where historical personae, fictional characters and their narratives oscillate between the continents bordering the Atlantic, thereby giving shape to new, hybrid identities. Although Gilroy originally developed his model to analyse the making of 19th and 20th century 'black' writing, his matrix has in the meantime been successfully appropriated in studies on the incipient phase of African intellectual discourse (Potkay and Burr 1995, Walvin 2000, Carretta and Gould 2001).

There are also good reasons for adapting the concept of a 'Black Atlantic' to the study of the early modern period, and to an analysis of *The Tempest* (c1611) in particular.[5] As will be shown below, the play rehearses the self-same intercontinental oscillation Gilroy describes since it features geographical terms which simultaneously evoke European, African and New World connotations. The same sense of geographical fluidity is also underscored by the play's allusion to the Fall of Ham, a myth which Renaissance culture regularly imposes on various colonial settings. Gilroy's concept of a discursive space thus offers a gateway for exploring symbolic dimensions which have a direct bearing on several key 'problems' of the play, such as Caliban's conspiracy or Prospero's sudden interruption of the masque.

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That *The Tempest* cannot be pinned down to one single continent becomes apparent as soon as one scrutinises the historical 'evidence' on which the various mappings of the play are based. The best-known, and still most widely-trusted, hypothesis of a New World is for instance often defended on the basis of two textual references, to the "still-vexed Bermudas" (1.2.230), from which Ariel must fetch some midnight dew, and to Caliban's god "Setebos" (1.2.375, 5.1.261), a Patagonian deity recorded in contemporary travel accounts.[6] Of these two quotations, the case for the Bermudas appears rather weak, for if Puck can "put a girdle round about the earth / In forty minutes" in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* (2.1.175-76), then Ariel should also encounter few difficulties accessing the Bermuda islands from anywhere (Franssen 1997:26). Another piece of evidence critics have regularly invoked is the assumption that the play's opening scene was influenced by William Stratchey's account of a

[5] Recently, Jonathan Goldberg (2004:ix) has also suggested mapping *The Tempest* within Gilroy's 'Black Atlantic', yet without historicising the paradigm.

[6] Setebos appears in Robert Eden's (1577) travel account of Maggelan's expedition, reprinted in Hakluyt (Kermode 1954:xxxii).

shipwreck near the Virginia coast in 1609, a text which Shakespeare presumably read in manuscript form.[7] Shakespeare's indebtedness to Stratchey is a theory which has not been seriously challenged in criticism; nonetheless, its authoritative status must not be exaggerated, given the likelihood that a seafaring nation like England may have possessed many similar tales of shipwrecked seamen on exotic shores which are no longer recorded in the fragmentary records of Western maritime historiography.

Apart from resorting to more speculative evidence,[8] critics have also attempted to substantiate a Caribbean setting by deriving the name *Caliban* from *Cannibal*, an etymological reading which despite its striking simplicity still awaits verification. For one thing, several viable alternatives to the name *Caliban* have been suggested. Scholars have for instance drawn attention to an African placename *Calibia* near the Mediterranean coast on a map in Richard Knolles' *History of the Turks* (1603), which Shakespeare consulted when writing *Othello*. The obscure Romany word *caulibon* ('black or dark thing') has also been cited as a possible root (Vaughan and Vaughan 1991:33-34), even though the dissemination of the term in Renaissance England remains questionable.[9] Crucially, though, even if the contested *Caliban*/*cannibal* link proves accurate, it does not necessarily confirm the Caribbean setting many critics have associated with it. While it is true that the term *cannibal* has been associated with the Carribean since the coining of the term on Columbus' first voyage (Hulme 1986:13-43), "[r]oughly half the uses of *cannibal* in English publications before 1611 neither state nor imply a connection to the Western Hemisphere", as the Arden editors Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan maintain (1991:30). And indeed their assertion seems justified, given that Shakespeare's best-known reference to cannibalism, in *Othello*, also speaks of "Anthropophagi" and "cannibals that each other eat" (1.3.142-43) who are not located in the Western hemisphere, but either in Africa or in the East.

Contrary to popular belief, then, there is truly "little textual evidence connecting Prospero's island with the Caribbean or any other part of the New World" (Franssen 1997:26), and the same objection may be raised against virtually any of the alternative settings proposed. The links to the Old World, for example, are numerous and of direct relevance to the plot, yet they alone cannot determine the island's setting either. Even though one would expect Caliban's and Prospero's island to lie somewhere between Naples and Tunis, a Mediterranean setting is constantly negated by the pristine

[7] Stratchey's so-called *True Reportory* was never actually printed, but only passed around in manuscript forms among members of the Virginia Company, some of whom had contacts with Shakespeare (Wright and Freund 1953:xx-xxiv).
[8] See for instance Stephen Orgel's claim that Gonzalo's description of an ideal commonwealth (2.1.151-53) must allude to the Virginia colony (Orgel 1987:32), or Leslie Fiedler's fanciful conjecture that the description of Caliban as a 'fish' locates him in the Western hemisphere, "which medieval scholars had believed to be all water" (1973:170).
[9] Notice that the theme of gypsy language is topicalised in Ben Jonson's *The Gypsies Metamorphos'd* (1620), written less than a decade after *The Tempest*, yet in the said mask, "Jonson makes no effort to catch the real gypsy *patois*. Instead he dismays us with an occasional spray of roguish gibble-gabble and counterfeit gypsy terms" (Randall 1975:114). Thus, if *caulibon* represents an authentic Romany word, rather than a pseudo-gypsy construct, this considerably weakens its status as a possible source for Caliban's name.

quality of the island, and by the absence of historical roots characteristic of the Old World.[10] The island rehearses the perennial myth of virgin territory which the English Renaissance regularly projects on remote regions in the West, South and East, but never onto the Mediterranean basin. The island's novelty is also indicated by the names of the cities from which its accidental visitors embark. Both *Naples* (<*nea-polis*) and *Carthage* (<*Qart Hadasht* in Phoenician) signify 'new city' (Hulme 1986:112), thus suggesting that the Old World setting should not be taken at face value, but as a template reconstructed in newly-discovered territories. After all, "[t]his Tunis […] [which] was Carthage" (2.1.82) does not solely stand for the Punic city in the Mediterranean, but also for two alternative Carthages jointly opposed by England, namely the seaport Cartagena in Spain, and Cartagena de Indias in the Iberian New World.

The first of these 'alternative' Carthages, Cartagena in Spain, was originally a Punic stronghold on the Iberian coastline before becoming the Roman capital of the colony Hispania. As the *Brief Summe of Geographie* (1540-41) by Roger Barlow documents, the English, too, were familiar with "the lesse cartago which is in europa and is called cartagena" (Taylor 1932:96), and the same applies to the far more influential Cartagena de Indias, in present-day Colombia. The latter was founded as a colonial settlement by the Spanish in 1533, and constituted the single most important slave port in the Spanish Americas from 1595 to 1640.[11] According to a recent study by Jonathan Schorsch (2004), Cartagena de Indias also became an influential base for the making of colonial discourse, being the hometown of the Jesuit Alonso de Sandoral, who in an influential treatise on slavery (*Un tratado sobre la esclavitud* (1627)) traced the origins of servitude to the curse on Canaan (2004:136-37, 149, 410n.82).

There is reason to believe that Elizabethans and Jacobeans were intimately familiar with Cartagena de Indias. A detailed account of the founding of the city is included in Richard Eden's *Decades* (1555:52v-r), the earliest extensive collection of travel narratives in the English language,[12] and subsequent sources remember Cartagena as a site of increasingly violent encounters between Spaniards and Englishmen. In 1568, John Hawkins, "Queen Elizabeth's slave trader" (Kelsey 2003), plans to visit the harbour in order to sell the last of his slaves to Spanish planters. However, the Spanish governor of the city, fearful of the English privateers, denies them the right to trade, and

[10] Before the arrival of Sycorax, this island was "not honoured with / A human shape" (1.2.285-86), Prospero claims, which rules out islands such as Crete, home to the Minotaur and one of the play's classical subtexts, as shown later on below.

[11] According to Robin Blackburn about 135,000 African slaves entered the port of Cartagena between 1595 and 1640, which corresponds to more than half of all African slaves shipped to the Spanish colonies during that time period (1997a:143). Cartagena remained one of the key centres of the Spanish slave trade until the 18th-century and beyond (Blackburn 1997a:458).

[12] According to Eden, the place was "named *Portus Carthaginis*, bothe bycause of the Ilande[']s standynge ageynst the course of the streame, & also that by reason of the largenes of the place and bendynge sydes, it is much lyke to the haven of Spaine cauled *Carthago*" (1555:52r). The passage is pointed out in Stephen Orgel's introduction to *The Tempest* (1987:40n.). Orgel, however, fails to realise the singular importance of the city as the hub of the Iberian American empire. Orgel's note is again footnoted in Barbara Fuchs (2004:277n.4), who equally fails to pursue the issue any further. The same kind of fleeting reference to the Spanish 'New Carthage' is made by Joyce Green MacDonald (2002:80).

refuses to sell them food and other provisions, thus forcing Hawkins' crew to tackle the long journey to Florida with few supplies (Hawkins 1569:A5v-A6v, Kelsey 2003:82-83).[13] Because of its prosperity, Cartagena is also besieged twice by Sir Francis Drake in the 1570s and 1580s. Upon Drake's first visit in 1572, the confrontation ends in a stalemate, with neither Drake able to enter the city nor the Spanish strong enough to chase the English ships away. In 1586 Drake returns, this time taking the city in a storm. The raid on Cartagena in February and March 1586 represents a severe humiliation of the Spanish by the English, and foreshadows the incipient demise of maritime Iberian power sealed by the overthrow of the Armada two years later. In the account published posthumously under the name of Drake's captain Walter Bigges, the conquest and partial destruction of Cartagena is therefore accorded primacy of place, and constitutes the climax of the entire narrative (Bigges 1589: 29-41, Fig. 72). Whereas the Spanish deplore the ransacking of Carthage as a painful turning point in their colonial expansion, the English celebrate it as a defining moment ushering in the dawn of their maritime hegemony in the Western hemisphere.[14]

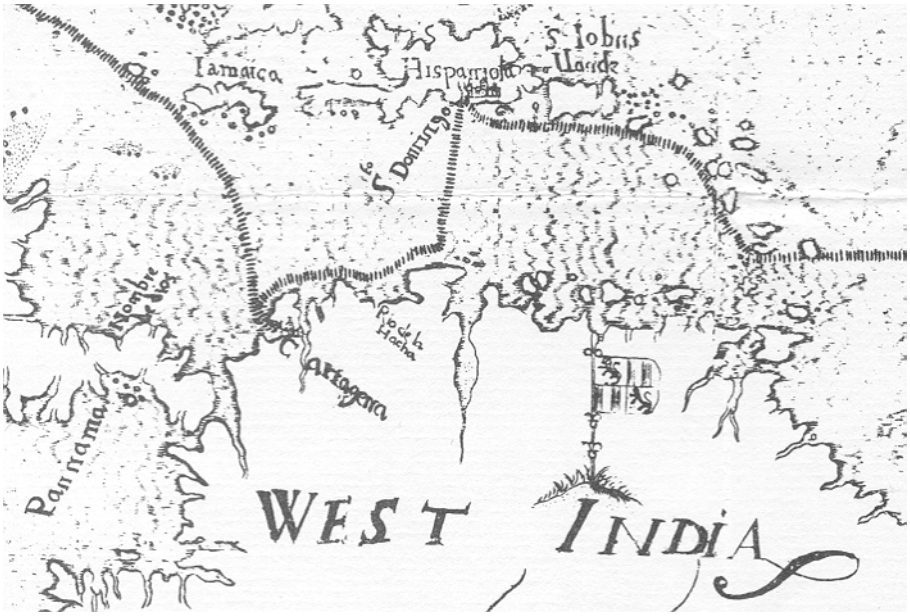

Figure 72. Excerpt from the general chart of Drake's voyage by 'Bapista B[oazio]' prefixed to Walter Bigges' *Summarie and True Discourse* (1589)

What seems particularly interesting in connection with *The Tempest* is the fact that during Drake's attack, one of the three Spanish ships stationed at Cartagena bore the highly suggestive name *Napolitana* (Wright 1951:xliv). Moreover, Walter Bigges' narrative speaks at length about Francis

[13] One is tempted to see a certain analogy between John Hawkins's crew and Shakespeare's Neapolitans in *The Tempest*, both of whom suffer a fierce storm after having left (most of) their human cargo in the vicinity of Carthage or Cartagena, respectively. Also, as Hawkins stresses in his report, his fleet only barely manages to return to England thanks to an unexpected spell of "faire and *prosper*ous [!] wether" (!) (Hawkins 1569: [B7v], emphasis added).

[14] The pertaining Spanish documents reflecting the consternated Iberian response have been translated and edited by Irene A. Wright (1951). For a detailed account of the sacking of Carthage in a wider historical context, see the biography of Drake by John Sugden (1990:191-97).

Drake's friendly relationship towards "*Alonso* Bravo[,] the chiefe commander of that place [Cartagena]" (1589:34, emphasis added), who is treated with considerably more civility than the rest of the Spanish prisoners, analogous to the respect with which Prospero treats Alonso, the King of Naples. Whether or not these parallels between Drake's expedition and *The Tempest* are in any way related to the making of Shakespeare's play remains a matter of speculation. Nevertheless, it is quite certain that for an England imagining itself as a second Rome, the parallels between Cartagena de Indias, the hub of the 'barbarous' Iberian empire, and Punic Carthage, the main rival of classical Rome, would have been too obvious to be overlooked at the time.

Fascinatingly, similar parallels such as the ones recorded in Biggs (1589) may be gleaned from the description of Carthage 'proper' in John Pory's translation of Leo Africanus. With Pory, "the great citie of Carthage" and "the mightie citie of Tunis" are characterised by decay and fall, both physically and morally. Tunis, the capital of the kingdom which "hath so *prosper*ed, that now it is accounted the richest kingdome in Africa" is said to be inhabited by women who are "marvellously provoked unto lust" when intoxicated (1600:5.247, emphasis added). Pory also describes how Tunis, a settlement sprawling uncontrollably "upon the decay of Carthage", is governed by a "marvellous cunning", morally corrupt king.[15] Significantly, Pory describes Tunis primarily in terms of absence: the city lacks sufficient water, houses many poor women forced "to lead an unchast life", abounds in mules (or deficient hybrids), and it is said to be "more destitute of wood" than any other place in Africa (1600:5.247). Astoundingly, Pory's description of Tunis is immediately followed by a brief sketch of "the towne of Neapolis", not the Italian city of Naples, but an insignificant town on African soil which bears the same name:

> This ancient towne [of Neapolis] built by the Romans upon the Mediterrean sea almost twelve miles eastward of Tunis is inhabited by certaine Moores called Nabell[16]. It was in times past very populous, but now there dwell but a few pesants therein, which exercise themselves onely about sowing and reaping of flaxe. (Pory 1600:5.251)

Seeing how *The Tempest* simultaneously evokes reminiscences of Dido's Carthage, of the Iberian seaport Cartagena in Spain, and of Cartagena de Indios on the one hand, and of Naples 'proper', of an African Neapolis, and of 'new cities' in the Western hemisphere on the other, it should be evident that Prospero's "brave new world" cannot be situated on one single continent alone. Far more meaningful appears a localising of the play within Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* (1993), a discursive space which may also be extended to encompass adjoining areas such as Ireland or the 'Orient'. By continuously harking back to "widow Dido", "the King of Tunis", "Carthage" and "Naples", the play rotates between cities of wealth (ancient Carthage, European Naples), cities of lust (classical Carthage, early modern Tunis) and cities of disease and punishment (tropical Carthage and

[15] The king's moral blindness is figuratively expressed by his personal fondness for listening to musicians who are brought to court "in blindfold or hoodwinked in a manner of a hawke" (1600:5.247).
[16] Notice that Pory's *Nabell* is not only shares the name of Alonso's hometown, but also represents a truncated version of Caliban's name read backwards (*lleban*).

Naples),[17] thereby crisscrossing that part of the southern Atlantic which early modern maps commonly label the "Aethiopicus Oceanus", the "Ethiopick Ocean" or the "Ethiopic Sea" (see Fig. 73).[18]

Figure 73. "Oceanus Aethiopicus" on the anonymous Spanish world map prefixed to John Pory's (1600) translation of Leo Africanus

Incidentally, the same intercontinental space is also referred to in Montaigne's essay *Of the Caniballes*, which is widely believed to be one of *The Tempest*'s most important sources. Montaigne revives a classical myth found in Aristotle, according to which "certaine Carthaginians[,] having sailed athwart the *Atlantike* Sea, […] at last discovered a great fertill I[s]land; all replenished with goodly woods, and watred with great and deepe rivers, farre-distant from all land" (Florio 1603:101). According to Montaigne, the Carthaginians saw themselves soon forced to outlaw "all [those] that were gone thether to dwell, fearing (as they said) that in successe of time, they would so multiply as they might one day supplant them, and overthrowe their owne estate" (Florio 1603:101). As this fable in Montaigne reminds us, ancient Carthage and its 'lost dominions' constitute powerful symbols of Western colonial desire from the Renaissance period onwards. In the historiography of European discovery, ancient Carthage regularly reappers as a placeholder for the power, knowledge and wealth

[17] Notice also the affinity of *Naples* with the *Neapolitan disease* or syphilis, a disease believed to be imported from the New World, which derived its name from the fact that it first spread extensively in the Italian city. On the localising of syphilis in early modern discourse, see the detailed discussion in the chapter "The Leper".

[18] See Norwich (1983: maps 11-31, maps 110-147). For specifically English examples, see the adaptation of Ortelius' worldmap prefixed to Richard Hakluyt's *Principall navigations* (1589) (Skelton 1974:Fig. 4), the anonymous Spanish map prefixed to John Pory's translation of Leo Africanus (1600), or John Speed's maps of Africa (1626, 1627) reprinted in Norwich (1983:maps 30-31). The term *Ethiopic Ocean* represents the standard term in European mapmaking from c. 1600 until the 1790s, and thus roughly correlates with the activity of slave trading until its official abolition in 1807 in England and the United States. After the 1790s, most maps speak of the *(Southern) Atlantic Ocean*, although some isolated usages of the term, just like the odd slave ship in the Atlantic, still linger on until the mid-19th century.

the explorers seek.[19] Interestingly, the desire for Carthaginian prosperity often coexists with a fear of being contaminated by establishing too intimate a contact with inhabitants of the corrupted city. In *The Tempest* too, the classical Dido / Aeneas myth is also deliberately altered to conform with the new colonial realities in anglophone territories.[20] While the classical Dido myth narrates the entrapment of a male Roman by an exotic temptress, *The Tempest* sees these gender roles inverted. Both Alonso's grief at "loos[ing]"[21] his "fair daughter Claribel" to an "African" (2.1.70, 125) and Caliban's attempted rape of Miranda show that it is the female European body which is in peril of being contaminated. The image of the libidinous male non-European is a myth of central importance for justifications of colonial labour in the anglophone tradition (see pages …), and it seems no accident that it should also occupy a salient place in the charactersation of Aaron, Othello and Caliban.

A similar blending of classical mythology with colonial discourse resurfaces in the characterisation of Sycorax, whose name has been most convincingly explained as a compound of Greek *sus* ('pig') and *corax* ('raven') (Kermode 1954:26n.258).[22] As a 'pig-raven', Sycorax not only embodies a state of hybridity typically associated with a marginalised existence, but the two animals constituting her name also evoke memories of witchcraft. Whereas ravens traditionally accompany witches in Western folklore, the pig aligns Sycorax with Homer's *Circe*, the North African sorceress exiled to a Mediterranean island, who notoriously turned humans into swine (Kermode 1954:1.2.258n.). Significantly, both Circe and a character named Corax appear in the consecutive dialogues in Philemon Holland's translation (1603) of Plutarch's *Moralia*, which have been shown to articulate arguments for and against colonial oppression earlier in the chapter on "The Lecher". The appropriation of the Circe myth to colonial discourse may be based on medieval forebears, since we already find in John Gower's *Vox clamantis* a reference to the participants of the English rebellion as "the accursed progeny of Ham, turned into beasts, as Circe transformed the servants of Ulysses" (Freedman 1999:93).[23] Regardless of its origin, the presence of the figure of Circe in *The Tempest* once more underscores how early modern colonial discourse recycles classical archetypal topoi to structure and mythologise new worlds.

An alternative etymology of *Sycorax* with equally strong ties to the play may be found in the obscure character called Corax in Plutarch's dialogue on "the delays of divine vengeance", which in

[19] Still in the 19th century, Mungo Park and his contemporaries were excited by the thought that in the interior of the African continent, "the knowledge and language of ancient Egypt may still imperfectly survive", together with "some portion of those arts and sciences, and of that commercial knowledge, for which the inhabitants of Carthage were once so eminently famed" (Pratt 1992:70).

[20] For an introduction to the Dido-Aeneas myth in the play, see Orgel (1987:39-40). The classical allusions are extensively discussed by Tudeau-Clayton (1998).

[21] On the various connotation of *loose* and *lose* in this particular passage, see MacDonald (2002:74-75).

[22] An alternative etymology derives Sycorax' name from a mountain range in the Caucasus which is labelled "Ye Mountaine Corax" in John Speed's map of Europe (1626) (Gillies 1994:142).

[23] The rubric to the passage in question (Macauly 1900:1.10.x.747-82) runs as follows: "Hic dicit se per sompnium vidisse progenies Chaym maledictas una com multitudine servorum nuper regis Vluxis, quos Circes in bestiias mutavit, furiis supradictis associari" (Freedman 1999:335, n.36).

Philemon Holland's translation directly precedes the dialogue featuring Circe. In the said dialogue, reference is made to a certain "Callondas, but men surnamed him Corax", who "killed a worthy personage consecrated & devoted unto the Muses" (Holland 1603:553). Bearing in mind Caliban's murder plot against Prospero, who acts as master of the muses of the island, this second parallel in Plutarch also seems very much to the point. Whatever may have inspired Shakespeare to name Caliban's mother, the answer is almost certainly to be found in classical myths displaced onto colonial soil.

Further evidence of Caliban's status and ethnic origin may be gleaned from Prospero's description of his mother as a "blew-eyed hag" (1.2.269). Critics have often interpreted this attribute as a reference to blue eye-lids, which symbolise pregnancy in some contemporary works, such as Webster's *Ducchess of Malfi* (Marcus 1996:5-17). However, the colour blue also bears many further connotation which are of much greater relevance to *The Tempest*. Blueness is often associated with servitude. According to Pliny, the Gauls dressed their slaves in blue clothes, and during the Renaissance, the liveries of servants and apprentices were mostly of the same colour (Williams 1994:120). Furthermore, blue may also symbolise lust. In Thomas Dekker's *Honest Whore* (1605), the heroine, "one of the Bridewell Birds […] in a blue gowne" (5.1.10), must in the end shed "her wanton loose attire, / That Garment she puts on, base to the eye" in order "to cloath her[self] in humility" (5.2.302) (Williams 1994:120). In Plutarch's dialogue "Of the delays of divine vengeance" mentioned above, blue denotes a lustful disposition: "[B]lew […]is a signe that there, intemperance and loosenesse in the use of pleasures, hath remained a long time, and will be hardly scowred off, for that it is a vile vice" (Holland 1603:558). Plutarch's description of a Dantesque purgatory in which a blue colour cannot be 'scowred off' evokes associations with blue as a marker of ethnicity in medieval writing. English texts customarily label Africans as *bluemen* up until the mid-16th century, when the term is gradually superseded by various equivalents for the colour *black* (Appendix 1: "blueman"). However, since bluemen and blue devils keep resurfacing throughout Renaissance culture, *The Tempest*'s 'blue' hag may simultaneously encode the multiple subtexts of servitude, lust and non-European ethnicity.

However, apart from this possible reference to her skin colour, Sycorax' ethnic status remains rather mysterious. As one born in Algiers (1.2.261), she is associated with a city situated on the blurred borderline separating Africa from the Orient. In Nicolas de Nicolay's *Navigations into Turkie*, the inhabitants of the city are sometimes described as "Turkes and Moores" (1585:6v) or as "Turkes or Moores" (1585:9v) in a loose nomenclature which may either have been intended to denote ethnicity or religious belief. The women of Algiers are described as notoriously lecherous, especially the city's "Moorishe women and mayden slaves", who are "commonly whole naked, saving that they weare a peece of cotton cloath of some strange colour to cover their secrete partes, (which notwithstanding for

a litle peece of money they will willinglie uncover)" (1585:9v).[24] Sycorax is credited with the same lecherous status as Nicholay's maidens of Algiers, and her craving for crossing ethical boundaries is further highlighted by her status as someone ostracised from the city "[f]or mischiefs manifold and sorceries terrible" (1.2.267).

As a sorceress and an exile, Sycorax also bears close affinities to the so-called 'Gypsies' (or Roma), who share the same status of an aimless wanderer, an image often beset with strong connotations of spiritual erring in Renaissance discourse. The 'Gypsies' first arrived in Europe in the early modern period, and were generally believed to derive from E*gypt*, hence their name.[25] This common superstition prevailed until the mid-17th century, as Thomas Browne observes in his *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*,[26] and during Shakespeare's time confidence in the myth seems to have prevailed, as did the popular belief in the magic skills of the Egyptians.[27] As pointed out in the chapter on Noah's curse, several Renaissance authors subscribed to the view that the Egyptians had been taught by Ham, the disobedient son, who surreptitiously stole such knowledge from Noah. Accordingly, we find references to this triangle of Gypsies, Egypt and magic in a variety of contemporary plays. In the anonymous *Edmund Ironside*, the ungrateful Edricus abuses his own mother by calling her an "old hag", a "witch", a "slut", a "whore" and a "black Egyptian" (Ule 1987:515-517). And, as discussed in the previous section, Othello's mother – who was most probably African – is also said to have received her magic handkerchief from an "Egyptian" fortune-teller (3.4.54-56).

There are several parallels between *Othello* and *The Tempest* seldom commented on in criticism which are helpful for understanding the ways in which the character of Caliban is constructed. Both Othello and Caliban are sons of conspicuously-absent mothers, and have inherited troublesome personal legacies. With Caliban, the purported misdeeds committed by the Algiers-born witch are continuously levelled at him by Prospero, while Othello is haunted by a belief in the magic power of his handkerchief given by his mother. Furthermore, both Caliban and Othello are overwhelmed by a discourse which denaturalises their outward appearance. The 'griev'd Moor' and Prospero's 'thing of darkness' are both othered on account of their somatic difference, or their 'blackness', a category which in the Renaissance could also encompass the complexion of North

[24] See also the accompanying illustration of a semi-naked woman of Alger (Nicolay 1585:11). For historical background information on Algiers during the Elizabethan period, see Wolf (1979).
[25] The term *gypsy* is derived from the Arabic name for Egypt (*gypt*), and early modern spellings such as *Gipcyans* still testify to the analogy (*OED* "gypsy" n. 1a). Nowadays, the Roma are known to be of Indian origin, and their language is derived from Sanskrit. Essential background reading on gypsies in Early Modern England is provided by Randall (1975:47-66).
[26] "Common opinion deriveth them from Ægypt, and from thence they derive themselves", Browne states, yet adds that this is a myth "of little probability" since eyewitnesses "who met great droves of Gypsies in Ægypt" realised that they, too, "were accounted strangers upon that Nation, and wanderers from foreign parts" (Robbins 1981:6.13.531).
[27] The association of magic with Egypt already occurs with Herodotus, who portrays the Egyptians as the ultimate experts who outstrip even skilful sorcerers such as Medea's Colchians (Gillies 1994:29).

Africans and Gypsies.[28] This 'othering', though, does not primarily rest on the black/white dichotomy, but is expressed via the familiar tropes of bestiality, disease and lechery. Both the Venetian Moor and Prospero's servant are epistemologically situated on the borderline between the known and the fabulous, among "men / Whose heads st[an]d in their breasts" (*TMP* 3.3.46-47) or amidst creatures "whose heads / Do grow beneath their shoulders" (*OTH* 1.3.143-44). In both plays, similar myths of monstrosity are evoked in order to construct a difference guarding the European from an all too intimate contact with the non-European body. Even though the descriptions of Caliban may appear too cryptic to offer any clue as to his outward appearance, the nature of these metaphors point towards the ethnic groups which are most frequently and most intensely vilified in early modern discourse, namely Africans and other 'Southern' nations. A large number of critics, at a loss as to what to make of the "very shallow monster" (2.2.136), the "moon-calf" (1.1.128) and the "debauched fish" (3.2.24), have settled for a reading of Caliban as a "conventional monster" (Luce 1905:xxxiii), or of a being inhabiting an inhuman shape. For example Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan, in their book-length study on Caliban, complain that "[w]hereas *The Tempest* is precise about Caliban's slavery, *it is annoyingly imprecise* about his deformity" (1991:9, emphasis added). However, one may justly oppose such a view and argue that Caliban *is* in fact meaningfully described in the play, not literally but encrypted in a symbolic code.

The descriptions of Caliban are principally of two kinds, evoking either images of hybridity or images of darkness. Significantly, Caliban is not a 'perfect' devil but a 'demi-devil' (5.1.275) like Iago (*OTH* 5.2.307), analogous to the Western iconography of Satan as a hybrid, and hybridity is further evoked in the memorable description of Caliban as "a freckled whelp" (1.2.285). These images of hybridity alternate with explicit assertions of Caliban's dark skin, as in Prospero's "this thing of darkness I acknowledge mine" (5.1.278-79), and with passages where skin colour is only subtly alluded to. Trinculo's "this is no fish, but an islander that hath lately suffered by a thunderbolt" (2.2.33-34),[29] for instance, may not refer solely to Caliban's crouching position, but also to his dark hue. After all, numerous early modern texts allegorise dark skin colour as originating from the scorching effected by Phaëton's tumbling sun chariot, and the same myth may be parodied again in Caliban's speculation that Stephano "dropped from heaven" (2.2.129). Moreover, Stephano's "Do you put tricks upon's with savages and men of Ind, ha?" (2.2.55-56) and Trinculo's day-dreaming about publicly displaying Caliban as "a dead Indian" (2.2.31) may refer to colour, since in Renaissance literature the term *Man of Ind* is often indiscriminately applied to Indians, West Indians, or Africans

[28] See e.g. likening of 'blackness' with "the Egipcians and ethyopiens" in *Secreta Secretorum* ("Of the colure", Ch. 58, p. 229). The first edition of Thomas Elyot's dictionary (1542) features the entry "Aethiopissa, a woman of Egypt", corrected to "a woman of Ethiope" in the second edition by Thomas Cooper (Bibliotheca Eliotae 1548, introduction p. 4). See also Thomas Dekker's statement (1620) against "counterfeit Egyptians", i.e. Englishmen who have disguised themselves as "Tawny Moore bastards […] not borne so […] but […] painted so" (quoted in Randall 1975:57-58), which equates Egyptians with Moores. Thomas Browne, writing on the subject of skin colour, still speaks of "artificial Negroes, or Gypsies" by the mid-17th century (*Pseudodoxia Epidemica* 1646, 6.10).

[29] The image is reiterated once more by Trinculo in the same scene: "I took him to be killed with a thunderstroke" (2.2.101).

(see Appendix 1). Even if the various monstrous shapes attributed to Caliban appear contradictory and puzzling, the dual mode of characterising him in images of darkness and hybridity identify him as a non-European stereotype.

Moreover, Caliban displays characteristics which Renaissance discourse generally attributes to 'barbaric' nations: being stubborn, unwilling to reform himself, and, most importantly, governed by an unrestrained sexual libido.[30] Caliban's own fetishising of his rape attempt of Miranda is what renders him most complicated for modern readers seeking to identify with Caliban as a heroic, unjustly suppressed colonial subject. Meredith Anne Skura tells the anecdote of an unnamed teacher, who apparently "suggested that *The Tempest* is a good play to teach in junior colleges because students can identify with Caliban" (1989:47). To many readers, such an assumption will appear rather gross, given the fact that Caliban's "O ho, O ho!" speech (1.2.352-54) makes him in Leslie Fiedler's words "the first nonwhite rapist in white man's literature" (1973:171). Even if Fiedler's assertion of Caliban's novelty ought to be taken with a pinch of salt (since Caliban is preceded by several other non-European rapists, such as Aaron in *Titus*), he is certainly right in identifying Caliban's libido as a topos with continuity in the Western tradition. Fiedler also hints at the possible classical roots of Caliban by calling him a "Minotaur rediscovered in the Indian" (1974:196). As a matter of fact, Fiedler is (probably unwittingly) dropping a useful hint, for Minos' monster is commonly represented in the same iconographic mode as Prospero's 'freckled whelp'. As the adulterous offspring of Poseidon's bull and Minos' wife Pasiphae, the Minotaur is a classical hybrid, who is commonly depicted as a semi-human with a bull's head. His hybrid status is further highlighted by the fact that his body covered with bright or dark spots (Fig. 74), which is also reflected in his second name *Asterios*, or 'the starry one' (Jaskolski 1994:25).[31]

[30] Even though the present discussion primarily reads the stereotyping of Caliban as a 'Southern man', the Irish dimension should also be borne in mind. Caliban's 'vices' listed above also correspond to the unruly, "evil native" of Ireland which coexists alongside the ideal of "the simple, meek, agrarian-minded laborer" who could be easily controlled (Brown 1996:37).

[31] For further examples, see the Greek and Etruscan pottery catalogued by Jan Bažant (1992: Figs. I.21, I.35) and by Susan Woodford (1992: Figs. 8, 9, 23). The vase reproduced above is also reprinted and discussed in Pastoureau (2001:31).

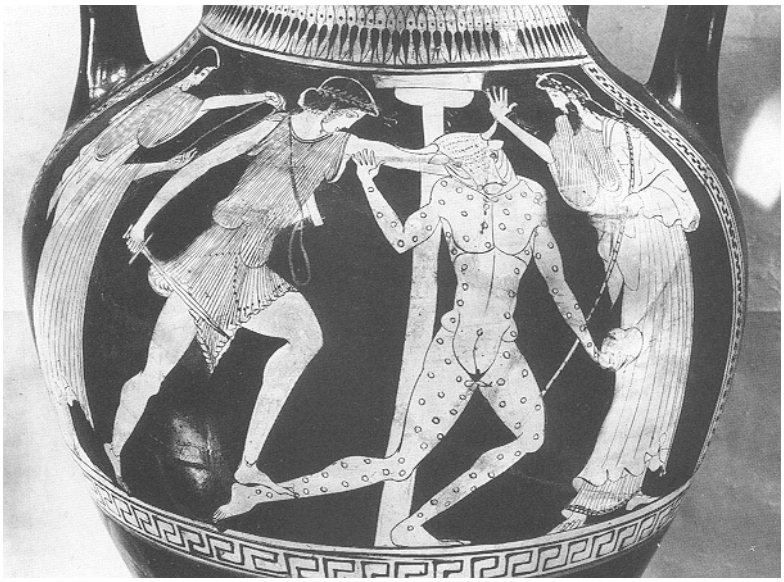

Figure 74. Theseus killing the Minotaur, with Minos looking on
Neck-amphora 470-460 BC (Bažant 1992: Fig. I.20)

Fiedler's reading of Caliban as the Minotaur also offers a cogent explanation for the question why various characters in the play should describe the mysterious island in a language more properly pertaining to the Cretan labyrinth. Gonzalo remarks that "torment, trouble, wonder, and a*maze*ment / Inhabits here" (5.1.106-07), a line subsequently picked up by Alonso ("This is as strange a Maze, as e'er men trod" (5.1.245)), and the theme is later echoed by several characters who profess being a*maze*d at the revelations of the island (Fiedler 1974:232).[32] Likewise, Stefano's reference to Caliban as a "bully-monster" (5.1.260) and Prospero's exhortations to Miranda reveal the island to be a labyrinth "[w]here Minotaurs and ugly treasons lurk" (*1H6* 5.5.145).

Furthermore, the classical myth of the Minotaur establishes an indirect link between *The Tempest* and the myth of Ham, whose importance seems to have been hitherto ignored in critical appreciations of the play. Pasiphae, upon falling in love with the bull, asks Daidalos to construct a hollow cow made of wood, within which she may consummate her love to the beast (Woodford 1992:I.574). Her wish to enjoy unnatural love within a wooden artifice may be seen as parallelling the forbidden sexual acts which Ham according to some textual versions consummated on the Ark. The same lust is ascribed to Caliban, a lumberman against his will, who in many ways resembles the Western stereotype of Noah's impudent son. The parallels between Ham and Caliban seem particularly suggestive, since Prospero's allegations against Caliban (his lechery, his rebellion against authority, his inability to learn, and his descent from Sycorax) parallel the manner in which Ham's Fall is instrumentalised by Renaissance writers to justify slavery and coerced labour.

[32] In fact, Gonzalo uses the word *maze* twice when speaking to Alonso, the first time in the third act: "Here's a maze trod indeed / Through forthrights and meanders" (3.3.2-3). Alonso is thus doubly indebted to Gonzalo's metaphor. The theme of the maze is already initiated in the second scene, with Prospero's reprimand to Miranda ("No more amazement", 1.2.14), and Ariel's report of the confusion he has wrought ("in every cabin, / I flamed amazement", 1.2.198-99).

If the ensuing reading of *The Tempest* as a refashioning of Genesis 9 appears novel in many respects, this is only because a whole series of critics has failed to pursue such an obvious line of enquiry, sometimes missing it by the skin of their teeth. Many scholars seem to have ignored the presence of symbolism altogether, like Harold Bloom, who grandiloquently proclaims: "Allegory was not a Shakespearean mode, and I find little in *The Tempest*" (1998:673). Yet even researchers specifically skimming the play for biblical symbolism and imagery have systematically overlooked the subtext of Ham's Fall. Richmond Noble's *Shakespeare's Biblical Knowledge* (1935) fails to draw attention to the analogy of Caliban and Ham, and Grace Hall's recent *The Tempest as Mystery Play* (1999) also does not mention the analogy.[33] There seem to have appeared only two studies which have vaguely hinted as the figure of Ham, yet without pursuing it in sufficient depth. Andrew Gurr (1996), in a review of postcolonial readings of the play, concludes that Ariel and Caliban are both equally suppressed by Prospero, the only difference being that "*the one* [*is*] *doing only the unskilled work of the sons of Ham*, fetching wood and water, while the other is empowered to enact the mage's supernatural commands" (205, emphasis added). Similarly, John Gillies (1994) likens Sycorax to "Ham, progenitor of the Canaanite, the Negro, and other supposedly bestial and slavish races" (143), yet without pursuing the idea any further. Both Gillies and Gurr see the analogy between Sycorax or Caliban on the one hand and Ham or Canaan on the other in very general terms on the level of colonial discourse alone. What they fail to consider, though, is that the principal characters and plot elements constituting the narrative of Ham's transgression in Genesis 9 are actually present in the play itself. In *The Tempest*, one may effortlessly discern the Flood (tempest), the ark (the various ships), Noah (Prospero), Ham (Caliban), Sem and Japhet whom Ham fails to corrupt (Stephano and Trinculo), drink (Stephano's liquor), the garments which the 'good' sons (Stephano and Trinculo) prefer to Noah's nakedness, and the mockery which constantly reverberates through the voice of Ham (Caliban).

Revisiting *The Tempest* in the light of Genesis 9 also offers a persuasive explanation for two perennial riddles in scholarship on the play, namely the motivation for Caliban's conspiracy and the reason for Prospero's sudden interruption of Miranda's and Ferdinand's wedding masque. Many scholars have attempted to account for Caliban's plot by comparing it to contemporary slave revolts (Fiedler 1973:173), to the Essex rebellion of 1601 (Patterson 1989:160) or to the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 (Wickham 1975:12). Edward Dowden has even interpreted it as a radical, and politically unacceptable, social uprising comparable to the French Revolution, "a sudden *schwärmerei*" or "fanaticism for liberty" accompanied by Caliban's own song, "his impassioned hymn of liberty, the *Marseillaise* of the enchanted island" (Dowden 1968:64). Not surprisingly, none of these literal

[33] In Hall's defense, though, it should be pointed out that Ham's Fall does not constitute an integral part of the mystery cycles still extant today. The popular episode of Noah and the Flood usually stops short of retelling the Fall of Ham. To my knowledge, the only allusions to the 'degeneracy' of Ham occur in the Noah episode in the *N-Town* play, in which the Ark's passengers repeatedly identify the flood as a punishment for "lechory" (Spector 1991:Noah 218, 235). Also, the scene constantly evokes reminiscences of Cain, Ham's spiritual brother, who is killed by Lameth before Noah's family boards the ark (Spector 1991:Noah 166-198).

readings has actually endured, and together they may have even contributed to the widespread view that Caliban's plot is "an episode" which is "superfluous and unaccountable" (Nevo 1999:85). However, when placed within a proper allegorical context, Caliban appears a highly significant element of the play, just like Prospero's interruption of the masque, which is triggered by a reflection of Caliban's revolt.

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The analogies between Genesis 9 and *The Tempest* are so numerous that it appears astounding that they should have remained overlooked for centuries of scholarship. The opening storm, to begin with, may very well have been inspired by contemporary distasters such as the shipwreck in the Caribbean described by Stratchey, yet semiotically, its reference to the biblical Flood is unmistakeable. Upon awakening on the island, the passengers are flabbergasted at having arrived unscathed, "[o]n their sustaining garments not a blemish / But fresher than before" (1.2.220-221), and the same statement is re-inforced twice again in the following act, where their clothes are said to be "as fresh as when […] put […] on first" (2.1.69) and "rather new-dyed than stained" (2.1.64). Analogous to the flood, which in the Western tradition constitutes a rite of purification equivalent to baptism (Haynes 2002:31), the storm cleanses the Neapolitan party from former sins, and foreshadows their final purging in Prospero's spell, after which they will be once more eligible to enter a new covenant with Prospero as their head. As a kind of *Sündflut* (literally, 'a flood of sin'), the storm punishes and purges. It may not completely eradicate the seeds of evils among the survivers, yet it foreshadows the grace Prospero will bestow on those who truly repent their transgressions at the end of the play.

Prospero's identity as a Noah-figure has been repeatedly hinted at before (Gillies 1999:199, Nevo 1999:87), yet not within the context of Ham's Fall. As pointed out earlier (page …), the Western tradition frequently fashions Noah into a paragon of virtue and a Christ-like victim unjustly suffering at the hands of his irreverent son. Yet Noah also elicits criticism, particularly from John Calvin, who reproaches him for his "foule and detestable […] dronkennesse", and for the "most filthie and shamefull" manner in which he presents himself to Ham, "to be made a scorne and iest of all men" (Tymme 1578:9.227-28). Calvin's interpretation is carried even further by the 16th century French Calvinist Guillaume De Salluste Sieur Du Bartas, whose poem "L'Arche" served as one source for Milton's depiction of the Flood in *Paradise Lost*. Guillaume Du Bartas negates the traditional defences of Noah by the Church fathers, and instead imagines him as a bitter old man whose drinking is a deliberate attempt "to overcome the sadness that cruelly afflict[s] his old age" (Haynes 2002:178). Having consumed the drink, Noah's "wandering speech […] becomes confused, unhealthy, stuttering, truncated", "his inebriated chest [is] wracked by winds and his whole shaken pavilion turns unsteadily" until he resembles "a dirty pig of a man [who] drops his snoring carcass shamelessly in the

middle of the lodging" (Haynes 2002:178). After being discovered by Ham, he recognises his error, yet, greatly ashamed, diverts attention from his failure by cursing Ham's offspring (Haynes 2002:178). To argue that Shakespeare had Guillaume Du Bartas' radical interpretation of Noah in mind when creating Prospero would seem highly speculative to say the least. Nevertheless, Du Bartas' uncompromising criticism of Noah should act as a reminder that the myth of Ham's curse was subject to a variety of interpretations in the Renaissance, including visions of Noah as an innocent victim or as one justly mocked.

The biblical ark is not only represented by the ship with which Prospero rescues the travellers at the end of the play (5.1.311), but also by the numerous allusions to the working with wood throughout the play. Collecting and chopping wood seem to constitute Caliban's principal duty, and even though Prospero claims that there is also "other business" for his 'slave' (1.2.318, 1.2.370), we never observe Caliban attending to those other duties. Instead, Caliban is told to "fetch in firing / At requiring" (1.2.164-65), even if "there's wood enough within", as he complains in his very first line in the play (1.2.316, also 1.2.369, 2.2.153, 2.2.155). Tellingly, the same element of wood reoccurs again in Prospero's dealing with Ferdinand and Ariel. To contain Ferdinand's virility, Prospero penalises him by forcing him to pile "some thousands of these logs" (3.1.10) (Ferdinand calls it a "wooden slavery" (3.1.62)), and he coerces Ariel into submission by threatening to repeat the punishment of Sycorax, who enclosed him in a pine tree for a dozen years (1.2.280, 1.2.295). By liberating Ariel, Prospero merely replaces his former 'pining' (or languishing) in his tree with yet another sort of 'pining', as the term is understood in early modern English, namely with physical labour.[34] Pine is also believed to be the wood out of which Noah manufactures his vessel ("God said unto Noah, make thee an Arke of pine trees" (Ralegh 1614:1.7.1.98)), and the spectacle of pines and pains on the island may be seen as corresponding to Noah's building of the Ark, which symbolises a place of sexual continence (Friedman 1981:236 n.54).[35] The only person abandoned as the ships depart is Caliban, or Prospero's Ham, who will be left to his "own polluted ways", as Milton describes the fate of Noah's "irreverent son" in *Paradise Lost* (Ricks 1989:12.100,110). Shying away from the pain of physical labour and of cultivating his land, Caliban will presumably let his island revert to its natural shape, like lustful Pan, who is traditionally associated with the phallic symbol of the pine tree.[36]

What provokes Ham's fall is Noah's state of intoxication; correspondingly, Caliban only plucks up courage to rebel against Prospero after having tasted Stephano's 'unearthly' liquor, which induces him to "swear upon that bottle" to be his subject (2.2.116). Conversely, Stephano instantly

[34] See the wide range of connotations of *to pine* in Early Modern English: to torment, to suffer, to labour, to be consumed through disease, to become feeble, and to be consumed with longing for love (*OED* "pine" v.).
[35] Notice the continuing stress on sexual continence on the Ark in some re-tellings of Genesis, as for instance in the so-called medieval *N-town play* (Spector 1991).
[36] See for the reference to "God Pan with garland on his heade of Pinetree" in Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1567:12).

recognises the power his drink exerts over Caliban. "This is what shall give language to you, cat", he jokes, thereby highlighting the fact that Caliban has established a common language with Stephano and Trinculo by sharing the power of drink. Stephano's reference to the proverbial wisdom that "Ale […] would make a cat speak" (Dent 1981:A99) signals the carnevalesque climax in the play in which extant hierarchies are turned upside down: Caliban the servant, accompanied by the duke's jester and butler, dreams of supplanting his master; Caliban the 'wild beast' becomes Caliban the 'eloquent cat'. Drink alienates Caliban from Prospero, and leads him to deny the service he owes his master. The *vilain*, or unfree serf, in the medieval sense of the word (Freedman 1999:10), turns into a *villain* of quite a different sort: a rebel, a would-be ravisher and a potential murderer.

The murder plot Caliban premeditates evokes a phallic imagery which mimics Ham's transgression. As Caliban explains to Stephano, the plan consists in surprising the sleeping Prospero in his hut by "knocking a nail into his head" (3.2.59):

There thou mayst brain him,
Having first seized his books; or with a log
Batter his skull, or paunch him with a stake,
Or cust his weasand with thy knife. Remember
First to possess his books, (3.2.83-87)

Most of the weapons with which Caliban intends to stab, strike and butcher Prospero bear sexual overtones. The nail in particular represents a widespread symbol of naked masculinity in medieval and early modern sources, especially in the proverbial expression *as naked as a nail*, which is first recorded in the mid-16th century (*OED* "naked" adj. 21e).[37] The idiom also occurs in colonial contexts, as for instance in the well-known narrative poem by Robert Baker on the second voyage to Guinea in 1562, which describes the natives as follows:

And entering in ['landing on shore'], wee see a number of blacke soules,
Whose likelinesse seem'd men to be, but all as blacke as coles.
Their Captaine comes to me *as naked as my naile*,
Not having witte or honestie to cover once his taile. (Hakluyt 1589:132)

Here, the references to the natives' 'nail' and 'tail' build on a well-established phallic symbolism which is also exploited in *The Tempest*. Caliban's plan to murder Prospero with a nail reinforces the meaning of the plot as a displacement of the sexual transgression of Ham against Noah, which in some early modern variants involves castration of the father or adulterous intercourse with his wife, or with beasts (that is, Noah's wards) on the Ark. Furthermore, the premeditated 'nailing' of Prospero also establishes a link to a central biblical narrative which is customarily invoked in Western retellings of Ham's mocking of Noah: the mocking of Christ. The two narratives are typically juxtaposed in medieval and early modern *bibliae pauperum*,[38] and *The Tempest* reconstructs the same analogy in order to consolidate the representation of Prospero as Caliban's victim. Thus, Prospero/Noah/Christ is

[37] See also the reference to "nailes of ill deli[gh]te" in Richard Rolle of Hampole's *Psalter* (c.1340), and the allusion to "the naile of pleasure and griefe" in Thomas Bowes' translation of *Primaudaye's French Academie* (1586) (*OED* "nail", n.6).
[38] See the 14th century manuscript version reproduced in Camesina and Heider (1863:Fig.21), and the 15th-century print of the *Biblia Pauperum* in Henry (1987:Fig. c).

both the victim and saviour of those who, even though initially opposing him, finally recognise him as their master and consent to enter upon a new covenant with him.

Just as Ham entices Sem and Japhet to join in the mockery of his father, so too Caliban attempts to win Stephano and Trinculo as confederates in his rebellion against Prospero. However, as in Genesis 9, the butler and the jester fail to support their fallen 'brother', and follow him only half-heartedly. As soon as they have arrived at the hut, the site of Caliban's imagined murder, they abandon the plot and are only interested in dressing themselves in Prospero's garments, similarly to Sem and Japhet, who cover Noah's nakedness to restore their father's authority. Despite Caliban's repeated protests, they persist in trying on Prospero's robes, thereby reenacting Sem's and Japhet's covering on their own bodies. Garments do possess a special significance in the play, as insignia of power, of magic, and as indicators of social rank. Prospero himself draws attention to the importance of clothing in his tutoring of Miranda ("Lend thy hand / And pluck my magic garment from me" (1.2.23-24), "Hence! Hang not on my garments" (1.2.176)), and also the intended supplanting of the sleeping Alonso by Sebastian and Antonio is expressed through an imagery of clothing:

Sebastian: "You did supplant your brother Prospero."
Antonio: "True: / And look how well my garments sit upon me." (2.1.267-77)

The symbolism of wearing inappropriate clothes would have appeared even more significant to a Jacobean audience, to whom clothes "were closer both to a second skin, a skin that names you, and to money than are the clothes that we wear today" (Jones and Stallybrass 2000:32). Elizabethans and Jacobeans were obliged to observe strict rules specifying what kinds of garments and ornaments were deemed appropriate for their particular social status. Royals, aristocrats, courtiers, members of parliament, clergymen, merchants and members of guilds were all meticulously distinguished from each other by a dress code indicating their respective rank. In one of her frequent "Proclamations of Apparel" (1597), Queen Elizabeth also explicitly justified the need for issuing the strict reglementation of garments as a necessary measure to prevent "unmeasurable disorder" and a "confusion also of degrees in all places" in society (Hughes and Larkin 1969:3.786).

The same inversion of an extant social order is also alluded to in the masquerade by Stephano and Trinculo, who entertain themselves by usurping Prospero's power, yet more in jest than in earnest. As 'proper' fools, they are authorized to tease and ape Prospero's manners as long as they do not pose any serious threat to Prospero's rule. Mocking only the representation of power in clothing rather than the legitimacy of his power as such, Stephano and Trinculo dream of a Sem and Japhet-like inheritance of patriarchal rights without undermining Prospero's authority. Whereas Caliban hopes to destroy the insignia of Prospero's power ("burn but his books" (3.2.90)), Stephano and Trinculo's obsession with trinkets and signs of prosperity shows them to subscribe to established power structures. In contrast to these 'harmless' jesters, Caliban is a comedian against his will. Being laughed at without intending to provoke laughter, he attempts to rise from his emasculated position, and aspires

to invert the existing social hierarchy on the island. Like Ham, who dreams of mastery over his own father, Caliban contemplates a violent usurpation of power. In consequence, he represents a subversive element which must be forced into submission.

In Genesis 9, Noah punishes Ham by cursing his progeny with a servile status; in *The Tempest*, the 'slave' Caliban is painfully reminded of his unfree state by the harsh physical castigation Prospero's spirits exert on him:

Prospero Fury, Fury! there, Tyrant, there! Hark, hark!

[*Exeunt Stefano, Trinculo, and Caliban, pursued by spirits*]

[*To Ariel*] Go, charge my goblins that they grind their joints
With dry convulsions, shorten up their sinews
With aged cramps, and more pinch-spotted make them
Than pard or cat o'mountain.
Ariel Hark, they roar!
Prospero Let them be hunted soundly. At this hour
Lies at my mercy all mine enemies. (4.1.253-259)

That this sort of chastisement is habitually inflicted upon Caliban is underscored by the fact that Caliban already anticipates such penalties should the murder plot fail. "[I]f he awake, / From toe to crown he'll fill our skins with pinches, / [And] [m]ake us strange stuff" (4.1.231-33), Caliban exclaims, and adds that they will be turned into "barnacles" and into "apes / With foreheads villainous low" (4.1.245-46). The strange idiom in which Caliban describes the various forms of punishments inflicted on the irreverent son have remained widely misunderstood in criticism. Paying close attention to the wording of Prospero's curses, though, offers in many ways the key to understanding the disconcerting ways in which Prospero shapes 'monstrous' Caliban, both physically and psychologically.

Most of the torments inflicted on Caliban are described in a language which oscillates within the unhallowed triangle of bestiality, disease and sexual intercourse. Caliban and his confederates are turned into "pards", "cat o'mountains", and "apes" who do not speak but "roar"; the spirits "grind their joints", "shorten up their sinews", plague them with "aged cramps" and hunt them "soundly" until their bodies are anything but sound; ultimately, their bodies are filled "with pinches", an expression bringing to mind Cleopatra's description of herself as a body turned "with Phoebus' amorous pinches black" (*ANT* 1.5.28). Most disconcertingly, this figurative language does not stand for "trivial harassments", as Thomas McFarland (1972:150) lightheartedly supposes. Underlying the comic relief by the butler and the jester ("O touch me not; I am not Stephano, but a cramp" (5.1.286)) is a discourse of brutal chastisement. Many of the puzzling expressions employed by Prospero and Caliban refer to genuine torture instruments used in medieval and early modern times, and in a colonial context especially.[39] *Pinching* carries the grisly subtext of physical flaggelation and torture on the rack (*OED* "pinch" v. 5), and when Caliban in the final act whines: "I shall be pinch'd to death" (5.1.276), he

[39] For a brief introduction to the horrors of torture in the wake of European discovery and colonialism, see Stephen Greenblatt's comments on such practice in early modern sources (1990:11-14).

articulates the fear of a real punishment regularly inflicted upon prisoners and slaves at the time. Similarly, his alarm at being "turned to barnacles" hardly refers to shellfish, as critics have often supposed (Greenblatt 1997:3097n.3), but to a torture instrument bearing the same name. These *barnacles* consisted of a short rod attached to a small noose of cord, through which the victim's upper lip was fed. By a subsequent twisting of the rod, acute agony was inflicted on the victim, who could also suffer permanent mutilation. Barnacles were mostly used for horses and asses rather than for humans (*OED* "barnacle" n.1), which once again emphasises the 'bestial' status to which the one thus tormented would be reduced.[40] Yet another torture instrument may be alluded to in Caliban's fear that Prospero will pinch him and his companions 'from toe to crown'. Literally, the word *crown* here denotes the top part of one's head, yet it may also allude to the notorious "scold's bridle" described in the chapter on *Titus Andronicus*, which in the description by Ralph Gardiner consists of "an Engine […], *which is like a Crown*, it being of Iron, which [i]s musled over the head and face" (Gardiner 1655:60.111).

The punishments which Prospero and Caliban allude to reveal a vicious circle in which torture and mutilation give rise to a rhetoric of othering which in turn serves as a pretext for inflicting further pain on the victim. When Prospero commands Ariel: "[M]ore pinch-spotted make them / Than pard or cat o'mountain", he authorises a physical marking of Caliban as an outcast which in turn facilitates the ostracising of the 'freckled whelp'. If Prospero truly subjects Caliban to the physical torment he and his 'slave' mention, then the multiple deformities ascribed to Caliban result to some degree from mutilations the servant has endured as a punishment for his disobedience. In other words, Caliban's otherness is literally written upon his body in order to construct physical difference. The 'pinch-spotted' servant is regularly pinched for his attempts to 'pinch' (or sexually enjoy) Miranda and to 'pinch' (or steal) Prospero's books, and the same retribution is inflicted on the Italians, who are likewise 'pinched' for their former transgressions.[41] However, while their sins are gradually purged by their trials, Caliban's spots of sin – just like Ham's and Canaan's – are believed to be ingrained and regularly 'cured' with physical abuse by the master. As someone "[w]hom stripes may move, not kindness" (1.2.348), Caliban literally becomes a striped, particoloured, suffering body. Typecast as the leopard which cannot change his spots, there is no escape for Caliban from a vicious process of othering, which alternates between cursing the 'marked' and 'marking' the cursed.[42]

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[40] Notice that there may be a link between the nasal speech of one 'barnacled' by such an instrument of torture and the *barnacle goose*, a term which could be applied to "one who speaks through his nose" (*OED* "barnacle" n.2, 4).

[41] Notice that the usage of *pinch* increases towards the end of the play. It appears prominently when Prospero lectures the suffering Sebastian: "Thou art pinch'd for't now" (5.1.60), and when Prospero asserts that due to his repeated treachery and boundless ambition, Sebastian's "inward pinches therefore are most strong" (5.1.63).

[42] Curiously, the leopard-like, spotted qualities Prospero literally 'imprints' on Caliban's body have been frequently reproduced in performances and in the visual arts without being recognised as such. Johann Heinrich Füssli's famous *Prospero, Miranda, Caliban and Ariel* (1789) (Vaughan and Vaughan 1999:Fig. 14, Schiff 1973:Fig. 742) features a cat crouching in the distance which may symbolise Caliban's leopard-like qualities. Even more explicitly, William Poel's production of 1897 (Lindley 2002:23) dressed Caliban in a spotted coat, thus marking him as a subversive figure along with the jester Trinculo in striped garb. More recently, modern productions have opted for a tattooed Caliban, as during the Shakespeare Festivals of Alabama and Nevada in 2002. See the official box office advertisement of the Alabama Festival

The marking of Caliban's body also highlights a shift of Prospero's voice from the oral to the visual. When ordering Caliban to be flogged until he is spotted like a 'pard or cat o'mountain', Prospero invokes the proverbial impossibility of 'changing the Ethiopian's skin, or the leopard's spots' (Jer 13:23), which appears very frequently in early modern discourse (Appendix 2). Possibly, the phrase may have been lifted out of the now lost manuscript of William Stratchey's *True Reportory*, since it appears in the marginal glosses to Purchas' reprint of Strachey's narrative (Purchas 1625:4.9.1755).[43] Crucially, the proverb is commonly used to terminate lengthy discussions, and to reduce complex arguments to simple 'facts'. Many classical and Renaissance texts utilise the image of the unchangeable Ethiopian as a final flourish to seal off their case. Lucian for instance ends his lampooning of the *Ignorant Book-Collector* with the words: "I know that in all this I am wasting words, and, as the proverb has it, [am] trying to scrub an Ethiop white" (Harmon 1960:28). Similarly, in several English and American sources from the 17th century onwards, the proverb is intended to bring all debates to a close, thereby economically merging form and content, function and meaning, text and metatext.[44] As a figure of speech calling for silence, the proverb becomes a useful rhetorical tool for Prospero in his attempt to capture his audience and to render them disempowered prisoners of his voice.

Silence also represents a key precondition for Prospero to succeed in presenting Caliban as a 'freak'. Prospero repeatedly demands silence, when lecturing Miranda, when instructing her and Ferdinand by means of the masque, when purging the Italian party or when giving orders to Ariel and Caliban. Literally an enemy to dialogue and dialectics, Prospero relies on the powers of rhetoric, and even more so on the impact of the visual, to overwhelm his spectators. This tendency is also reflected in the mode in which he parades Caliban, the 'spotted' beast, in front of the Italian nobility. Deprived of his own voice, Caliban is patronisingly introduced as a "degenerate slave" without being allotted any room to speak for himself. As a monster, Caliban is de-*monstr*-ated to his audience, and displayed as a human object. Juxtaposed to the properly clothed noblemen, semi-naked Caliban in his rags offers a surprising spectacle, not only to the Italians unbelievably gaping at him, but also to the audience of the play. By presenting Caliban's physiognomy as the ultimate proof of his degeneracy, Prospero consolidates the representation of Caliban as an unnatural, inhuman creature, which epistemologically rests on two separate pillars of evidence. On the one hand Caliban is denouced as Ham, or a lecher, who poses a threat to Miranda ("O ho, O ho! would't had been done!" (1.2.351)) and even to Prospero himself. On the other hand, Caliban is Canaan, who is damned for his 'dam', having been "got by the

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2002 (http://www.asf.net/ archives_tempest.cfm), and a review of the Nevada Shakespeare Festival 2002 (http://www.newsreview. com/issues/reno/ 2002-06-13/theater.asp). Yet another modern production involving a tattooed Caliban is referred to by Zabus and Dwyer (1997:283).

[43] Linking *The Tempest* to a marginal gloss now only preserved in a version Shakespeare never saw and which also belongs to a different genre is of course beset with methodological uncertainties, as Skura (1989:52) rightly points out.

[44] See Francis White's *Reply to the Jesuit Fisher's Anwere* (1624:573-74), Roger William's *John Fox digg'd out of his burrows* (1676) (Williams 1963:5.425), John Reid's *The Religion of the Bible and the Religion of K[ing] W[illiam] County Compared* (1769) (Davis 1967:29.64-65), or also Thomas Dixon's notorious *The Leopard's Spots* (1902:17.459), which does not give away the meaning of the title until the very end.

devil himself" upon Sycorax (1.2.320). By oscillating between Caliban's lechery and his ancestry, his leopard-like scars and his itching body, Prospero ushers in a spectacle of the monstrous which overwhelms his audience, and convinces it of the 'baseness' of his slave.

However, as Stephen Greenblatt has taught us in an influential article (Greenblatt 1990:16-39), Caliban curses back in the language he receives: "The red plague rid you / For learning me your language" (1.2.367-68), Caliban foams, and he continues:

All the infections that the sun sucks up
From bogs, fens, flats, on Prosper fall, and make him
By inch-meal a disease! (2.2.1-3)

Significantly, Caliban's curses are, just like Prospero's, sated with images of bestiality, of disease, and of hybridity. Painfully familiar with Prospero's hound *Tyrant*, Caliban recognises that tyranny resides in Prospero himself ("A plague upon the *tyrant* that I serve!" (2.2.154, emphasis added)), and seeks solace in imagining his master as a burnt, deformed, diseased, castrated figure, as Robert Browning imagines him in *Caliban upon Setebos* (1860): "[I]f his leg snapped, brittle clay, / And he lay stupid-like – why, I should laugh" (Allison 1983:745, line 86).[45]

The idiom which Caliban parrots is also present when addressing characters other than his master. "What a pied ninny's this!" (3.2.64) Caliban mocks Trinculo, and ridicules the jester clad in motley as a hybrid, or as a 'magpie-like' creature. It does indeed seem ironic that Caliban, who greatly suffers at being dehumanised by Prospero's voice and Prospero's "stripes" (1.2.348), should mock another disempowered figure as an 'unnatural hybrid'. Then again, Caliban's misdirected curse may also be intended as a hint towards the similarity of fools and non-Europeans in the matrix of Western epistemology. Caliban's failure to establish a proper alliance with the fools Stephano and Trinculo – two negations of Italian nobility – makes his rebellion against Prospero's rule implode. The carnevalesque moment in *The Tempest* is only of short duration. Like Ham, Caliban is ultimately defeated by an omniscient Noah-figure who, in the midst of the extensive wedding masque, is suddenly reminded of "that foul conspiracy / Of the beast Caliban and his confederates" (4.1.139-40). The abruptness with which Prospero calls off the wedding masque has, just like Caliban's enigmatic plot, remained one of the great mysteries in criticism on *The Tempest*. If there is any validity to the reading of Ham's Fall suggested above, then it should also accommodate a cogent explanation of this startling psychological moment in the play. How the interruption of the masque may be seen as substantiating and extending the interpretation of *The Tempest* as Genesis 9 revisited will be explained below.

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[45] Notice that Robert Browning's poem, probably the most sensitive critical commentary on *The Tempest* ever, in many ways anticipates the present reading of the play as Ham's fall revisited.

Several critics have found a curious absence of mirth and comic relief in *The Tempest*. According to G. Wilson Knight, "*The Tempest* is an austere work" (1968:124), and there are few instances in which the spectator may lean back in comfort, relish the spectacle and wait for events to unfold. Even Trinculo's and Stephano's pranks, the most comical elements in the play, contain a darker note, as their discourse intersects with narratives of power and domination, and with Caliban's plotting. The serenity of the play seems closely related to the omnipresence of Prospero's voice, which often verges on the authorial voice of an omniscient narrator (Hulme 1986:116-17). There is a sense in which Prospero shapes the whole play, not just by speaking more extensively than all the other characters, but also by revealing the play to be an extension of his own self. This becomes nowhere clearer than in the wedding masque, in which the spirits act as a mirror of his own mind ("Spirits, which by mine Art / I have from their confines called to enact / *My present fancies*" (4.1.120-122, emphasis added)). Interestingly, if Prospero speaks truthfully, then the masque does not represent a preconceived, previously composed work of art, but an interior monologue constantly in the making, as Prospero's stress on its temporal aspect ("my *present* fancies") indicates. Since during the masque no-one else prompts Prospero on the conspiracy of Caliban, it appears clear within Prospero's mind that the two trains of thought of the masque and of Caliban's plot must somehow intersect. And indeed, one may easily find a common link between the two in the symbolic code underlying the graceful performance which ushers in images of interethnic corruption and thereby subtly undermines the spirit of marital bliss Prospero hopes to convey.

Traditionally, critics have read Prospero's wedding masque as a pastoral idyll with little relevance to the themes characterising the rest of the play. Robert F. Willson exemplifies such a view when claiming that the masque "invite[s] us into a pastoral paradise of plenty, free from the passions of lustful men like Antonio and Sebastian and of creatures like Caliban" which is destroyed by "the very thought of Caliban's plot" (Willson 1992:47).[46] There is, however, reason to mistrust such an interpretation, especially since Prospero's accompanying commentary reflects the agonies and pains perpetually running through his mind. The repeated exhortations to the spectators ("No tongue! All eyes! be silent" (4.1.59), "Sweet, now, silence" (4.1.124)) hark back to the didactic mode which characterises the teaching of Miranda in the first Act. Prospero's interjections reflect an anxiety which is principally grounded on the mistrust he harbours against Ferdinand and against his Eve-like daughter Miranda (the "[p]oor worm […] infected" with desire (3.1.32)), but also against Caliban, Ariel and against all Italians except Gonzalo. The purpose of the entire masque is to instruct Miranda and Ferdinand not to untie Miranda's "virgin-knot" (4.1.15) prematurely, lest their marriage should incur curses instead of blessings (Revard 1995:16). At the outset, therefore, the masque presents peaceful images of an idealised, chaste love free from all impurity and danger. Iris speaks of agricultural bliss, of well-fed sheep, filled barns, "lass-lorn" bachelors and well-trimmed vineyards

[46] Stephen Orgel also believes that "[m]issing from the revels are violence, lust, death, and, above all, a sense of the importance of the moment, of time as a series of crises. This sense has filled the play" (1987:50).

(4.1.62-68), thereby establishing a mood of serene orderliness and sexual continence. The masque's emphasis on the guarding of female purity is also expressed through the image of the peacock (4.1.74), which stands for Argus, a mythical Prospero-figure who is killed while shielding chaste Io from the clasps of lusty Zeus.

Soon afterwards, the mood darkens, as Ceres reminds Iris of how her own daughter (Proserpine) lost her innocence by being abducted by Venus' son "Dis" (i.e. Pluto or Hades),[47] the god of the underworld:

Tell me, heavenly bow,
If Venus or her son, as thou dost know,
Do now attend the Queen. Since they did plot
The means that dusky Dis my daughter got,
Her and her blind boy's scandalled company
I have forsworn. (*TMP* 4.1.86-91)

The references to "dusky Dis" and to his "scandalled company" act as a reminder of the conspiracy led by Caliban (which encompasses the abduction of Miranda), yet it also associates Caliban's Fall with numerous classical and biblical antecedents. The ravishing of Proserpine by Hades/Pluto/Dis, most famously retold by Ovid and Virgil,[48] serves in the Western tradition as a metaphor for Satan's penetration of Eve's mind (Forsyth 1991:354-55). More significantly still, Proserpine's rape also features prominently in *Paradise Lost*, where an analogy is drawn between flower-tending Eve and her classical predecessor (Forsyth 1991:354). Thus, Milton refers to

that fair field
Of Enna, where Proserpine gath'ring flow'rs,
Herself a fairer flow'r by gloomy Dis
Was gather'd, which cost Ceres all that pain (Ricks 1989: 4.268-71)

In the masque, though, Ceres' fears of Venus and dusky Dis are quickly allayed by Iris ("Of her society / Be not afraid" (4.1.91-92)), and even more so by Juno, whose arrival sparks a return to the wishful dreams of eternal spring and summer (4.1.114-15). At this point, Ferdinand interrupts and cannot help expressing his admiration of the "majestic vision" (4.1.118) conjured up by his future father-in-law, who "[m]akes this place paradise" (4.1.124). Prospero, however, quickly curbs Ferdinand's light-hearted enthusiasm: "Sweet now, silent. / Juno and Ceres whisper *seriously*" (4.1.124-25, emphasis added), he cautions, and indeed, Prospero's remark seems apt, since the "Paradise" (which Ferdinand equals with patriarchal bliss) is on the brink of collapsing into a paradise lost.

Incorporating a subtext of degeneracy in the masque seems highly unusual, for Renaissance playwrights conventionally strictly separate the masque 'proper', holding up an idealising mirror to the audience, from the 'antimasque', a "spectacle of strangeness" (Orgel 1965:129) which depicts "the grotesque, the ribald, or whatever the audience was ready to accept as socially sub-standard" (Frye

[47] The term "Dis" is borrowed from Ovid: "Dis spide hir, lov[']d hir, caught hier up, and all at once were neere: / So hastie, hot and swift a thing is love, as may appeere" (Golding 1587:5.70r).
[48] For a comparative reading of "dusky Dis" in *The Tempest* and in Virgil, see Tudeau-Clayton (1998:199-200).

1978b:18). The case for separating the two types is explicitly made by Francis Bacon in his essay *Of Masques and Triumphs*: "As for angels, it is not comical enough to put them in anti-masques; and any thing that is hideous, as devils, giants, is on the other side as unfit" (Spalding 1861:6.468). According to Bacon, the range of monstrous creatures displayed in such antimasques is endless,[49] yet, since the main purpose is not to shock but to delight, Bacon insists: "Let antimasques not be long" (Spalding 1861:6.468). The anti-masque, also spelled *antemasque* with some contemporaries, is supposed to precede the masque, so as to be overcome by the more pleasant vision following it. This structure also underlay the first fully-developed antimasque in Ben Jonson's *Masque of Queenes* (1609), which Jonson added to comply with a request of Queen Anne's.[50] The antimasque and the masque, then, stage a progression from bawdy 'lowness' to a dignified, sophisticated spectacle, which sets forth the brilliance of the latter even more powerfully (Frye 1978:18-19). In *The Tempest*, these two principles of the progression from ant[e]masque to masque, and of their neat separation, are flouted. That the sudden leap from the graceful allegory of Iris and Ceres to Prospero's concern with Caliban inverts the masque's conventional order has long been noted (Vaughan and Vaughan 1991:80). However, what seems to have been systematically overlooked is how disturbing elements of the antimasque gradually seep into and corrupt the masque while Prospero's stately vision is still in process.

In "Shakespeare's Virginian Masque" (1986), John Gillies has successfully juxtaposed Prospero's show to Chapman's *Memorable Masque*, which was performed together with *The Tempest* at court for the marriage of Princess Elizabeth to the Elector Palatine in February 1613. Even though both spectacles may have been related to the self-same area of Virginia, which was christened after the "Virgin Queen" Elizabeth by Walter Ralegh in a symbolic act in 1584,[51] they express fundamentally different viewpoints concerning the economic success and the social implications of colonial enterprises. Chapman's masque replicates conventional myths of colonial prosperity and educational success as we find them echoed in Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blackness* (1605) or Anthony Munday's *Chrysanaleia* (1616). With Chapman, a delegation of Virginians arrives in Britain and showers their new lords with gifts and thankfulness, not only offering them a gold mine, but also renouncing their pagan sun goddess in favour of the rising sun of Britain (Gillies 1986:674). *The Tempest*, of course, acerbically parodies such a myth. Jaded Caliban, Prospero's one and only subject, only grudgingly fetches firewood, and destitute Prospero, dwelling in a "cell" rather than a stately home, has positively abandoned all hope of ever receiving any gratitude from his heathen servant. In the courtly

[49] "[T]hey have been commonly of fools, satyrs, baboons, wild-men, antics, beasts, sprites, witches, Ethiops, pigmies, turquets, nymphs, rustics, Cupids, statuas moving, and the like" (Spalding 1861:6.468).
[50] According to Jonson, he was told "to think on some *Daunce*, or shew, that might praecede hers [*The Masque of Queenes*], and have the place of a foyle, or false-Masque" (Orgel 1965:131). On Anne of Denmark's influence on the form of the masque, see Lewalski (1993). The growth of the antimasque as a form has more recently been analysed in depth by Lesley (1999).
[51] Notice that whereas Chapman's masque is explicitly called Virginian, John Gillies infers the Virginian identity of the setting of Prospero's masque from physical descriptions which match a variety of colonial contexts. There is in fact a significant absence of any specifically tropical plants or exotic animals; in fact, "nibbling sheep" (4.1.62) are the most exotic creatures mentioned in Prospero's masque.

performance of both works in 1613, the public would have certainly felt Chapman's utopia being questioned by Shakespeare's dystopia (Gillies 1986:675), and a similar opposition obviously also prevails on the levels of the two masques, with Prospero's masque parodying Chapman's vision. The masque in *The Tempest* does not resolve conflict, as Ben Jonson's masques do, which regularly present lecherous satyrs overcome, evil witches exiled, emotions pacified by reason, or dark skin cleansed (Orgel 1987:45). Instead, it inverts this conventional order by displaying a masque which steadily progresses towards a Fall, which is also symbolically encoded in the approaching of the harvest season, or autumn.

In the final part of the masque, Iris invites "temperate nymphs" to celebrate a "contract of true love" with a group of "sunburned sicklemen", whose description bears strong affinities to familiar stereotypes of the exotic Other:

[*Enter certaine nymphs*]
Iris: You sunburned sicklemen, of August weary,
Come hither from the furrow and be merry;
Make holiday, your rye-straw hats put on,
And these fresh nymphs encounter every one
In country footing. (4.1.134-38)

If one scrutinizes the images Iris conveys, Prospero's impulsive reaction, which immediately follows these lines, appears far less enigmatic than most critics would have us believe. The "sunburned sicklemen" accommodates images of pathology ('sick men'), of deformity ('burnt'), and of sexual lust ('burning' in a figurative sense) (Gillies 1999:199), which early modern discourse systemically projects onto skin colour. Furthermore, the image of the "sickle" alludes to the scythe of 'melancholic' Saturn, and reveals the labourers to be grim reapers related to the "dusky Dis" referred to earlier. The merrymaking of the footloose labourers, who take advantage of their "holiday", contravenes everything Prospero considers meet and "holy"; indeed, Prospero sees the greatest danger to his rule in an idle Caliban, Ferdinand or Ariel.[52] The idea of low-born, weary (note the sexual pun!), hot youths mingling indiscriminately with "fresh" and "temperate" nymphs in a "country footing" fits squarely with the covenant of sublimated love Prospero intends to teach his couple. As more and more disturbing images fill the masque, and *Iris*' vision becomes unbearable to Prospero's *eye*/*I*, the maker suddenly interrupts: "Avoid; *no more*!" (4.1.142).

Obviously, Prospero does not primarily interrupt the revels to thwart Caliban's plot; Ariel has already long ago taken care of that (4.1.181-84).[53] Instead, it is the haunting spectacle of the corrupted masque itself which Prospero can no longer take. Like Claudius in *Hamlet*, whose motive for 'giving o'er the play' remains a mystery to the rest of the audience, so too Miranda and Ferdinand are at a loss

[52] I fully agree with Terence Hawkes that "[n]obody seems to toil in this agrarian paradise of bursting plenitude", but cannot quite see how these "idealised Reapers" should "serv[e] to support an established and work-dominated social order" (1999:54).
[53] Notice also that Ariel was afraid to bother his master with such trifles: "When I presented Ceres / I thought to have told thee of it, but I feared / Lest I might anger thee" (4.1.167-69).

as to how to account for Prospero's sudden change of mind ("*This is strange*. Your father's in some passion / That works him strongly" (4.1.143-44, emphasis added)). Prospero, though visibly relieved ("Our revels now are ended" (4.1.148)), shows no inclination to explain himself. "Bear with me my weakness. My old brain is troubled. / Be not disturbed with my infirmity" (4.1.159-60), he feebly apologises, while contemplating what the *dis*turbing plot by the "dusky Dis" actually represents: a mocking of authority, a usurping of power, an imaginary staining of sexual purity, or in short: a Ham-like Fall.

Even though Prospero's interruption parallels Claudius' admission of guilt in *Hamlet* to some extent, it also fundamentally differs with respect to the psychological constellation underlying such an 'entrapment'. For whereas Claudius' emotional outburst is triggered by an unknown play devised by Hamlet, Prospero's interruption of the antimasque is directed against his own imagination, from which the masque ultimately springs. As readers or spectators, we are left with two possibilities of making sense of this unusual psychological paradox. Either the interruption is seen as a failure of Prospero's imagination, mirroring his inability to sustain the illusion of an orderly Eden untouched by the disturbing subtexts such wishful thinking suppresses; or, the sudden interruption represents a deliberate, calculated, strategic move staged by Prospero to achieve a particular effect. Since both interpretation are valid and plausible, the following discussion will pursue both, and explain how they are related to the construction of Caliban by Prospero.[54]

That Prospero is genuinely disturbed would seem to be in line with the general tone of the play. Ever the anxious patriarch, he lectures Miranda to preserve her chastity, sermonises the corrupt Italian noblemen to reform, devises constantly new schemes to wear down the virility of Ferdinand and Caliban by physical exertion, and presides over an order which threatens to crumble without his constant surveillance. Like Argus, Prospero constantly worries about the safety of Miranda, and like Noah, he is haunted by dangers directed at himself. For Prospero, ruling his island becomes a burden and a source of steady unease. Colonial rule does not fill Prospero with the pleasure he associates with his golden days in Milan. Instead, it leaves him haunted by fundamental questions regarding the legitimacy of his rule, and regarding the coherence of his own narrative. As Francis Barker and Peter Hulme have phrased it, Prospero seems to be as filled with "an unconscious anxiety concerning the grounding of his legitimacy, both as producer of his play and, *a fortiori*, as governor of the island" (1996:202).[55]

[54] My distinction between two different readings of Prospero's interruption of the masque roughly correlates with Francis Barker's and Peter Hulme's two approaches which they label 'psychoanalytical analysis' and 'generic analysis' in their article "Nymphs and reapers heavily vanish" (1996:202-04).

[55] George Lamming puts this even more dramatically in his essay "A Monster, a Child, a Slave" (1960), in which he writes: "His [i.e. Prospero's] imperialism is like an illness, not only in his personal relationships, but in his relation to the external and foreign world" (Hulme and Sherman 2004:164).

What fosters this general sense of disquiet are the manifold lacunae, or 'subversive' counter-narratives, underlying Prospero's narrative. The most conspicuous of these is the physical absence of mothers, Prospero's wife and Sycorax, by whom the social status of Miranda and of Caliban are determined. The absence of Sycorax is particularly significant, since only a silencing of her voice can usher in the myth of Caliban's monstrous ancestry. It seems quite plausible, as Stephen Orgel surmises, that this allegation constitutes "Prospero's contribution to the story, an especially creative piece of invective" (Orgel 1988:221).[56] A further consequential lacuna prevails in the absence of Caliban's father ("a devil"), a gap which is surprisingly filled by Prospero himself, who at the end of the play grudgingly declares: "This thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine" (5.1.278-79). As Stephen Greenblatt has pointed out, the nature of the bond Prospero acknowledges may represent a negated family bond, a form of ownership, or some other "moral responsibility" towards his slave and his wayward student (Greenblatt 1990:26). Regardless of its precise nature, the acknowledgement mirrors Prospero's unease, and points towards a psychic agony which Michel Montaigne and other Renaissance thinkers associate with a diseased, disturbing imagination.

In the essay *Of Idlenesse*, Montaigne describes how a prolonged state of inactivity after retirement from work gradually turns into a nightmare. Haunted by "sicke mens dreames" full of "many extravagant *Chimeraes*, and fantasticall monsters, so orderlesse, and without any reason" (Florio 1603:1.8.14-15), the narrator is effectively robbed of the solace and rest he is seeking. The self-same theme is continued in the essay *Of the force of imagination*, which documents how the narrator's "sense hath often usurped the sense of a third man" (Florio 1603:1.20.40) and has become turned into a self-destructive force. Montaigne continues to narrate anecdotes bordering on hyperbole, of prisoners falling dead to the ground upon merely seeing "the scaffold, wounded onely by the stroke of imagination", of kings growing horns after being haunted by nightmares of cuckoldry, of men accidentally changing their gender, and of women giving rise to 'blackamoors' and to hairy monsters after contemplating such shapes in their minds (Florio 1603:1.20.40-41, 45). For Montaigne, 'imagination' represents a boundless receptacle of deus-ex-machina explanations for complex natural phenomena, such as the transmission of colour, and thus occupies a similar role as the fanciful 'black bile' in medieval and Renaissance medical discourse.[57] Prospero, who is left stranded against his will on a remote island for twelve years, may be seen as owning a disturbed 'fancy' very much on a par with the diseased minds described by Montaigne and by other Renaissance anthropologists,[58] which suggests that his confession of mental infirmity may very well be taken at face value.

[56] According to Ania Loomba, the topos of a monstrous ancestry regularly crops up in narratives legitimising the sexual abuse and rape of female colonial bodies (1999:146).
[57] The function of imagination in theories on the transmission of colour has been discussed in more detail in the chapter "The Lecher" (pages …).
[58] For similar Renaissance theories on mental disease, see Thomas Johnson's translation of Ambroise Paré (1634:25.7.978-79), or John Davis' collection of verse entitled *Nosce Teipsum* (1599), discussed in Semonin (1986:79).

Then again, seeing how perfectly Prospero controls the fate of every single character on the island, and how unwillingly he admits personal weakness, there is a hollowness ringing through his admission of mental weakness. The suspicion that the 'failed' plot is an ingenious design to entrap not just Miranda or Ferdinand but also the reader seems supported by the fact that Prospero's excuse for his failure is addressed to the audience alone:

[*aside*] I had forgot that foul conspiracy
Of the beast Caliban and his confederates
Against my life. The minute of their plot
Is almost come. (4.1.139-42)

Since Prospero has not only received word of the plot, but can even tell that "the minute […] / [Has] almost come", one is tempted to doubt whether Prospero's forgetfulness is truly genuine, especially since he would possess formidable motives for letting the plot develop further before intervening. After all, Caliban's revolt represents the perfect justification for the harsh measures by which he chastises, controls, and others Caliban. As Peter Hulme points out, "the fact that he [Prospero] has not bothered to immobilize the conspirators indicates that he desires the conspiracy to run its course" (1986:116).[59] Just as Noah requires the presence of fallen Ham to fashion himself into a Christ-like victim, so too Prospero needs the 'degenerate' Caliban to conspire in order to legitimise his authoritarian rule. From such a point of view, his claim to have temporarily 'forgotten' about the plot appears ludicrous to say the least.

Since until the final epilogue, in which he renounces his power, Prospero retains his mastery over the narrative, the entire appearance of Caliban must be critically read against the backdrop of Prospero's own personal interests. The strategies by which Prospero convinces the reader of the 'monstrous' nature of Caliban are versatile, and highly effective. Caliban's 'deficiencies' are never constant, but vary continuously throughout the play. Caliban alternatingly embodies Ham (the lecher), Canaan (the son of evil Sycorax), or Cain (the murderer of his own kin). He is likened to a leopard (or beast), to a mad or diseased outcast (like a leper), to a low-born 'villain', to an unteachable native, to the medieval allegorical Vice ("Shrug'st thou, malice?" (1.2.370)), and to an inarticulate barbarian. For Prospero, Caliban is never just guilty of one single offence, but always of various transgressions simultaneously, which enables Prospero to reprimand his 'slave' at will for his alleged bastard origin, for his attempted rape, his sloth, his attempted murder, and for his insolence. This oscillation between various accusations create a dynamic which precludes any proper defense on Caliban's behalf.

However, if one surveys the rhetorical strategies by which Prospero operates, it seems surprising how regularly Prospero's censure of Caliban backfires. Prospero's accusation of Caliban as a rapist ("thou didst seek to violate / The honour of my child" (1.2.350-51)), for instance, merely fuels

[59] In an earlier paper underlying his *Colonial Encounters* (1986), Peter Hulme also speaks of Caliban's plot as "an alibi initiated by Prospero himself (hence his 'inexplicable' anger)" (Hulme 1981:74). In his joint article written with Francis Barker, Hulme reiterates the distinct possibility that "[t]he shakiness of Prospero's position is indeed staged" (1996:203).

Caliban's wishful thinking ("O ho! O ho! Would't had been done!" (1.2.352)), and appears a highly ineffective strategy to either appease Caliban or to force him into submission. That the cursing of Caliban breeds reciprocity ("You taught me language, and my profit on't / Is I know how to curse" (1.2.366-67)) should not come as a surprise. Instead, what does seem astonishing is Prospero's assumption that cursing Caliban will restore respect in Caliban. While Prospero's insults and curses may be regarded as an ineffective, though genuine attempt at asserting control over Caliban, one may also argue that the extended haggling with his servants in the second scene is nothing less than a public showdown teaching Miranda and the reader the degeneracy of Caliban.

The strategies by which Prospero actively shapes the image of Caliban become most evident if compared to the tricks of 'juglers' and of 'monster-mongers' advertising human 'freaks' and 'prodigies' in the marketplace in the early modern period and beyond (Mowat 1981:297-203, Semonin 1996, Martin 2002, Burnett 2002:125-153). A key prerequisite underlying a successful display of human exhibits at a Bartholomew Fair,[60] or on a similar occasion, was to create a distance between audience and human exhibit, thereby turning the person on display into an object. The isolation and exposure of Caliban are stressed throughout the play. Prospero constantly acts as the mediator between Caliban and other characters, and often also between Caliban and the audience, thereby ensuring that Caliban's exceptional status is 'seen' by all. The shipwrecked Italian noblemen (except Stephano and Trinculo) are systematically prevented from making any contact with Caliban until the very final scene, in which the three renegades are paraded in front of them as in a freak show:

Sebastian Ha, ha! What things are these, my lord Antonio?
Will money buy 'em?
Antonio Very like; one of them
Is a plain fish, and no doubt marketable.
Prospero Mark but the badges of these men, my lords,
Then say if they be true. This misshapen knave,
His mother was a witch, and one so strong
That could control the moon, make flows and ebbs,
And deal in her command without her power.
These three have robbed me, and this demi-devil,
For he's a bastard one, had plotted with them
To take my life. (5.1.267-77)

Prospero's running commentary on the 'marketable fish' Caliban and his peers caters perfectly to an Italian gentry accustomed to such commercialised displays. The narrative accompanying the display excels in hyperbole ("a witch […] so strong / That could control the moon"), and capitalises on a murder plot which never represented a genuine threat in the first place. By displacing their voices with his own, Prospero deprives his human objects of speaking for themselves, and actively encourages the audience to disregard the utterances of Caliban and his confederates. "Mark but the badges of these men, […] / Then say if they be true", he asserts, thereby foregrounding the visuality of his spectacle over everything else. According to Prospero, truth is em*bodied* in the human physique, and one's outward appearance is the most reliable voice the objects speaks.

[60] On the Bartholomew Fair in England, a custom institutionalised as early as 1133, see Semonin (1996:76-77).

The self-same teaching by 'seeing' is what Prospero preaches during the masque ("No tongue, all eyes! All eyes! Be silent." (4.1.59)), and it is by exploiting visuality alone that Prospero succeeds in recognising Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo as a 'humorous' display. Remarkably, the 'badges' Stephano and Trinculo wear were deliberately placed in Prospero's cell to catch them red-handed,[61] and also the "grand liquor" (5.1.283) may have been purposely placed in the vicinity of Stephano and Trinculo to lead them into temptation.[62] Lastly, Caliban's 'fish-like' appearance, accompanied by "a very ancient and fish-like smell" (2.2.25), starkly contrasts with the aristocratic Italians, whose clothes were freshly rinsed by Prospero's power. In *The Tempest*, appearances are deceptive, and the final contrast between the immaculately clean shipwrecked passengers and the stinking, dirty native Caliban is by no means accidental, but overseen by Prospero's spirits. The same trick of establishing contrasts is exploited when presenting Caliban as a 'degenerate' human to the audience. Caliban is often juxtaposed to Ariel, both in the arrangement of scenes, as well as in Prospero's own language. In Prospero's mind, the two servants occupy the status of complementary pairs: air/earth, magic/physical labour, colour/invisibility, efficiency/unproductivity, industry/idleness, beauty/ugliness, loyalty/rebellion, protection/threat.[63] Then again, there are certain qualities Prospero would like to foreground in Caliban for which Ariel cannot provide the necessary contrasts: lechery, bestiality, degeneracy. To highlight these, Prospero needs Ferdinand, a second "Caliban" (1.2.483), to flesh out Caliban as the negation of a chaste, pure, civilised, genteel, enculturated Self.

What makes Prospero such a persuasive presenter is the fact that his function as a mediator is coupled with the roles of preacher and teacher, first mainly of Miranda, then also of the Neapolitans, and lastly also of the audience itself.[64] By engaging in a lengthy argument with Caliban, Prospero effectively sets the tone of addressing his 'slave' which Miranda subsequently parrots in her famous "Abhorred slave"-speech (2.1.354-366). Moreover, Miranda's fear of Caliban ("'Tis a villain, sir / I do not love to look on" (1.2.312-13) is partly fostered by Prospero, for a great deal of Caliban's 'deformity' is nothing but a reflection of Prospero's torture 'marking' Caliban as a 'villain'. Prospero teaches by assuming a variety of roles: he is both Archangel Gabriel entreating Eve (Miranda) to protect her purity, a physician narrating his frustrated attempts to 'cure' Caliban of his moral vices, a prophet of future events, and an anthropologist furnishing the dazzled spectators with a fanciful explanation of Caliban's shape. As the chronicler of the island, the island's history is indeed 'his

[61] "The trumpery ['cheap goods'] in my house, go bring it hither / For stale ['decoy, bait'] to catch these thieves" (4.1.186-87).
[62] Sebastian wonders: "He is drunk now. Where had he wine?" (5.1.281), and Alonso reiterates: "Where should they / Find this grand liquor that hath gilded them?" (5.1.282-83)). Stefano earlier explained that he had made "this bottle […] of the bark of a tree with mine own hands since I was cast ashore" (2.2.114-15), which, however, only makes the origin of the liquor more mysterious.
[63] Notice that some Renaissance thinkers argued that skin colour derived from a "hidden qualitie of the soile" (Purchas 1625:6.14.545), one of them being André Thévet in his *Cosmographie universelle* (1575) (Cohen 1980:77). See also Andrew Gurr's comparison in "Industrious Ariel and idle Caliban" (1996).
[64] For a suggestive juxtaposition of the figure of Prospero to early modern notions of teaching and punishing at schools, see Carey-Webb (1999). The interplay of dialogue and torture discussed below has most thoroughly been theorised in Scarry (1985).

story', as are the personal histories of Caliban, of Ariel and of Miranda and of himself. What should not be forgotten, though, is that the entire spectacle the audience is presented with in *The Tempest* ultimately serves Prospero's own ends, namely the regaining of political power in Milan by means of a magic whose benevolent character can only be demonstrated by the evil it defeats. To the audience, this magical power is nowhere more apparent than in the power of narrative Prospero himself controls.

The primary symbol in which Prospero's magic art and narrative power are conflated is the book. "Seiz[e] his books" (3.2.84) and "[b]urn but his books" (3.2.90) Caliban cautions Stephano and Trinculo, well aware that the power Prospero wields is encoded in language. In Neoplatonist thought, Ham's transgression consists in stealing Noah's knowledge of magic,[65] yet what Caliban desires is not just to topple Prospero's power, but to overcome Prospero's narrative with a history reinscribing the island as his territory. The struggle about hegemony over the island is truly a fight about epistemological supremacy, and this is also reflected in the wording of Caliban's submission to Stephano. When Stephano baptises Caliban with the bottle, he calls it his 'book' ("Here, kiss the book!" (2.2.122)), and later on even adds: "Come, swear to that. Kiss the book. *I will furnish it* / *anon with new contents*" (2.2.134-35, emphasis added). In contrast to his unconditional acceptance of Stephano's 'book', Caliban never shows a comparable acceptance of Prospero's narrative. Indeed, Prospero's 'book' and its 'contents' only breed Caliban's discontent, which is why many critics have claimed that Caliban represents the greatest failure of Prospero's art (Orgel 1987:23). Yet paradoxically, as a failure Caliban also constitutes Prospero's greatest success, for he authorises an unqualified segregation of labour, prestige, rights, and bodies which elevates the rightful Duke of "Millaine" (thus spelled throughout the *Folio*) above the 'villain' Caliban. Contrariwise, an enculturated, diligent Caliban would constitute Prospero's greatest failure by debasing him to the state of otherness which he systematically disowns.

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The foregoing interpretation has conceived of *The Tempest* as a play in which the strings are pulled by a narrator behind the scenes, and in which accidents do not occur. Prospero's self-representation as an ageing Noah who for one moment fails to guard his authority may be intended as a genuine, critical self-accusation. Then again, it may represent a ploy to assert his legitimacy. Only *after* Ham's transgression can the omniscient Noah curse Ham. And only once Caliban's conspiracy has been witnessed by all may Prospero hunt him down, parade him in front of the Italian nobility, expel him from the Ark ("Go to, away!" (5.1.301)), and exclude him from the salvation predestined for the (treacherous) Italian noblemen and their train. If the discovery of Miranda and 'revived' Ferdinand at chess is meant to symbolise a rejuvenated humanity "recovered from the Fall" (Willson 1992:47), then

[65] See the discussion of Annius of Viterbo, and the reception of his ideas in English texts in the chapter "The Lecher" (pages …).

this prelapsarian bliss deliberately excludes disturbing non-Europeans from its realm.[66] The play concludes thus by asserting both the necessity for segregation as well as the servile status of Caliban, who suddenly – and for many readers unconvincingly – "seek[s] for grace" (5.1.299). Whatever the impact of Caliban's own voice on the reader, a final verdict on the construction of his character cannot be reached without scrutinising the ways in which Caliban's entire appearance is shaped by Prospero, the juggler, stage magician, director and perhaps even playwright. On the level of character, there is a Caliban who resists Prospero, and who by his resistance takes responsibility for his disempowered status. However, on the level of narrative, Caliban is 'made' by Prospero. It is through Prospero's art that Stephano and Trinculo meet the rebellious slave, upon which he sets up on his Ham-like plot. The degree to which we are imprisoned in Prospero's voice is truly problematic, for it encumbers any attempt to 'unedit' Caliban and to free his representation from the filter of Prospero's bias.

This study has not been the first to note how intensely *The Tempest* is dominated by Prospero's voice. Coleridge called Prospero "the very Shakespeare himself, as it were, of [*T*]*he* [*T*]*empest*" (Hulme and Sherman 2004:122), and 20th century critics have frequently expressed similar views. According to Harold Bloom, "*Prospero* would be a far apter title than *The Tempest*" (1998:667), and Peter Hulme has also pointed out that the "[t]raditional identification of Prospero with Shakespeare, though totally spurious, half grasps the crucial point that Prospero, like Shakespeare, is a dramatist and creator of theatrical effect" (1986:115). This authorial function of Prospero has also been successfully dramatised by Peter Greenaway, whose *Prospero's Books* makes all voices Prospero's (Donaldson 1997). The impact of Prospero's voice on the interpretation of the play (and of Caliban in particular) is not to be underestimated, for it appears that by all intents and purposes "we have no way of distinguishing the facts about Caliban and Sycorax from Prospero's invective about them", as Stephen Orgel rightly points out (1988:221). Prospero's voice is indeed intricately interwoven with the reconstruction of past events. Miranda, for instance, who cannot remember the events leading to her father's deposition and exile, entirely relies on her father's narrative to reconstruct events from the past (Peterson 1992:143).[67] With the exception of Ariel, the only character capable of articulating distinct memories of the past is Prospero, whose very own narrative is one giving shape to the island (Aercke 1992:147-48).

Given this overarching sense of Prospero shaping the play, it is interesting to see how comprehensively the majority of critics since John Dryden have been captured by his narrative, at least with respect to the characterisation of Caliban. According to Dryden, Caliban displays

> all the discontents, and malice of a witch, and of a devil, besides a convenient proportion of the deadly sins; gluttony, sloth, and lust, are manifest; the dejectedness of a slave is equally given him, and the ignorance of one bred up in a desert island (Palmer 1968:30)

[66] Incidentally, the game of chess itself may be regarded as a game mimicking not only political rule, courtship, the battle of the sexes and the taming of erotic power (Loughrey and Taylor 1982), but also the teaching of colour difference.
[67] "Alack, for pity! / I, not rememb'ring how I cried out then, / Will cry it o'er again" (1.2.132-34).

Dryden's damning judgement on Caliban, and the enumeration of his vices and shortcomings could very well be Prospero's,[68] and the same spirit pervades the statement by the mid-18th century critic Joseph Warton, according to whom "Calyban *is* the son of a witch, begotten by a demon", characterised by "brutal barbarity and unfeeling savageness" (Palmer 1968:37-38). Similar assessments of Caliban also abound in 20th century criticism. G. Wilson Knight (1947), for instance, asserts that "[m]an, savage, ape, water-beast, dragon, semi-devil – Caliban *is* all of them" (Palmer 1968:119, emphasis mine). And James Smith, in a misplaced sentimental mode, pities Caliban for his misshapen body, without showing the slightest consideration of the ways in which Caliban has been physically and epistemologically constructed:

> A ludicrous ugliness is a heavy cross for a man to bear; […]. [O]nly once does Stephano, the most kindly disposed of all towards Caliban, gratify the latter with the name of 'man-monster'; only once does he go ever so far as to call him 'Monsieur Monster'; for the most part of the time he is content with the name 'servant monster', the anthropomorphic suggestions of which are no more than slight, if indeed they exist. And if Prospero on one occasion allows himself to group Caliban along with Stephano and Trinculo as 'men', and again, a few lines later, as 'fellows', he would seem on that occasion to be attending chiefly to other thoughts; normally at any rate his language is of quite a different kind. On the other hand, Miranda allows herself to compare Caliban with Ferdinand, the paragon of men, and to do so with respect ot physical form. And yet, as we have seen, she is also capable of omitting Caliban from the list of men. Perhaps I had better warn against any attempt to solve the problem of Caliban by putting him down as an ape. However easy, in these days of evolutionism, the solution may appear, it is forbidden not only by chronology but also, I believe, by evolutionary orthodoxy. (Smith 1974:195-96).

Smith's speculation of an ape-like Caliban not only shocks for its Neo-Darwinist leanings, but also amazes for its failure to see through the construction of character. Stephano, Trinculo, Miranda and the other Italians assess Caliban on a grid which is culturally and ethnically charged, and they are bound to write off as 'monstrous' anything deviating from the 'norm'. Since all these voices are either inspired, controlled, governed or even invented by Prospero, it is not surprising to find the same ethnocentric perspective prevailing among all of them. "We are such stuff / As dreams are made on" (4.1.156-157), Prospero accurately states, and Caliban embodies the perfect proof of how characters are *made* into "strange stuff" (4.1.323) by the force of Prospero's imagination.

The great conviction with which critics have asserted the 'monstrous' status of Caliban has often rested on the assumption that Caliban's non-anthropogenic shape is asserted by evidence situated outside of Prospero's voice, namely by the identification of Caliban as a "salvage[69] and deformed slave" in the list of characters supplied in the *First Folio*. The impact of this pithy line on the critical reception of Caliban has been immense. Convinced that it must represent an 'objective' statement on Caliban, most critics have lifted the phrase out of the *Folio* without scrutinising its origin. The *OED*, which generally does not list literary characters, contains an entry on "Caliban" which quotes the *Folio* verbatim,[70] and traditional scholars have often comfortably retreated behind this labelling, such as Frank Kermode, who concludes his discussion of Caliban by flatly agreeing that the character "is,

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[68] Also, just like Prospero, Dryden does not seem in the least disturbed by the fact that Miranda and Hippolito (Dryden's addition in his remake of the play), who should in theory display the same "ignorance" as Caliban, do not share the irreverent son's 'discontents' and 'malice'.

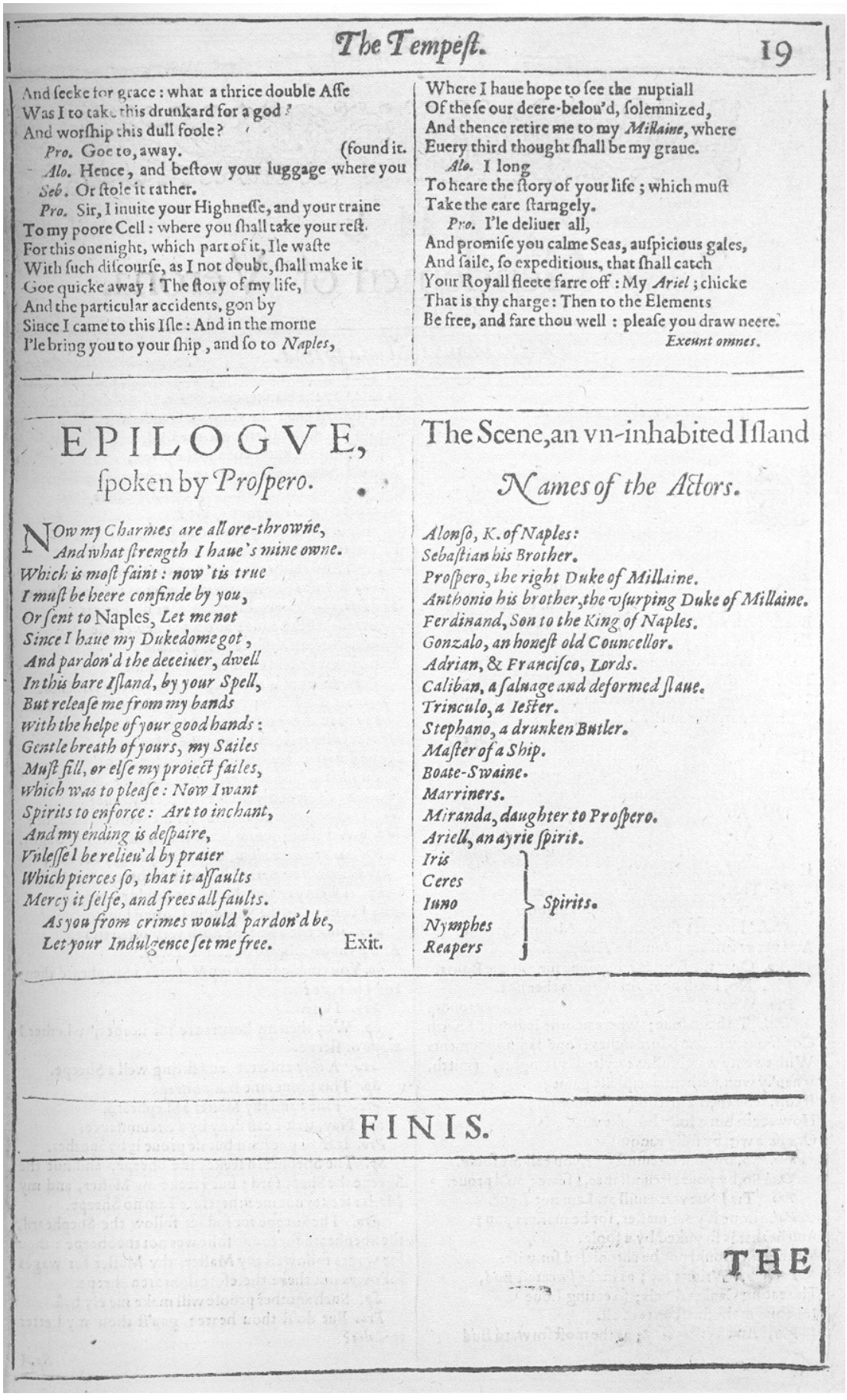
[69] There is no distinct difference between *salvage* and *savage* in early modern English; the two variants merely reflect the fact that the term entered simultaneously via French (*sauvage*) and Italian (*selvaggio*) (Vaughan and Vaughan 1991:7-8).

[70] "The name of a character in Shakespeare's *Tempest*, 'a saluage and deformed slave' (*Dram[atis] Personæ*); thence applied to a man of degraded bestial nature" (*OED* "Caliban", n.)

therefore, accurately described in the Folio *Names of the Actors*" (1954:xlii). This unreserved trust in the *Folio* text does not seem to have waned with the postcolonial tide, for we find even critics like Ania Loomba asserting that Caliban's status is "confirmed by the list of *personae*" (1999:136).

However, when close-reading the relevant *Folio* page (Fig. 75), the suspicion arises that the line characterising Caliban does not possess the authoritative status it has generally been endowed with. In fact, it probably pertains to the editorial apparatus rather than to the original substance of the play, and may be thus considered an interpretive comment rather than an authorial affirmation of Prospero's voice.[71] Such a hypothesis is all the more plausible since the *Folio* text is known to have exacerbated rather than lessened ethnocentric prejudice. In a very recent article, Leah S. Marcus (2004) has convincingly shown that the *Folio* versions of *Titus Andronicus* and *Othello* express a considerably stronger 'racial' bias than the *Quartos* versions of the self-same plays.[72] There is thus a dire need for abandoning an unconditional trust in the *Folio* text in favour of a more analytical view which considers it a multilayered, and considerably edited, text.

[71] Meredith Anne Skura makes a similar point when she attributes this characterisation of Caliban to the *Folio*, but not necessarily to Shakespeare ("four words […] which Shakespeare may or may not have written" (1999:48n.34)).
[72] Marcus shows in detail how the roughly 160 lines which are present in the *Folio* version of *Othello* "contain some of the play's most racially charged language" and establish "a community view" of miscegenation which is lacking in the *Quarto* (2004:23, 25). She notices "[a] similar shift" taking place in *Titus Andronicus*, whose Folio text contains some extremely vindictive lines on the "damn'd Moore" missing in the First Quarto of 1594 (2004:33).



And ſeeke for grace: what a thrice double Aſſe
Was I to take this drunkard for a god?
And worſhip this dull foole?
Pro. Goe to, away. (found it.
Alo. Hence, and beſtow your luggage where you
Seb. Or ſtole it rather.
Pro. Sir, I inuite your Highneſſe, and your traine
To my poore Cell: where you ſhall take your reſt.
For this one night, which part of it, Ile waſte
With ſuch diſcourſe, as I not doubt, ſhall make it
Goe quicke away: The ſtory of my life,
And the particular accidents, gon by
Since I came to this Iſle: And in the morne
I'le bring you to your ſhip, and ſo to *Naples*,
Where I haue hope to ſee the nuptiall
Of theſe our deere-belou'd, ſolemnized,
And thence retire me to my *Millaine*, where
Euery third thought ſhall be my graue.
Alo. I long
To heare the ſtory of your life; which muſt
Take the eare ſtrangely.
Pro. I'le deliuer all,
And promiſe you calme Seas, auſpicious gales,
And ſaile, ſo expeditious, that ſhall catch
Your Royall fleete farre off: My *Ariel*; chicke
That is thy charge: Then to the Elements
Be free, and fare thou well: pleaſe you draw neere.
Exeunt omnes.

EPILOGVE,
ſpoken by *Proſpero.*

NOw my Charmes are all ore-throwne,
And what ſtrength I haue's mine owne.
Which is moſt faint: now 'tis true
I muſt be heere confinde by you,
Or ſent to Naples, *Let me not*
Since I haue my Dukedome got,
And pardon'd the deceiuer, dwell
In this bare Iſland, by your Spell,
But releaſe me from my bands
with the helpe of your good hands:
Gentle breath of yours, my Sailes
Muſt fill, or elſe my proiect failes,
which was to pleaſe: Now I want
Spirits to enforce: Art to inchant,
And my ending is deſpaire,
Vnleſſe I be relieu'd by praier
Which pierces ſo, that it aſſaults
Mercy it ſelfe, and frees all faults.
As you from crimes would pardon'd be,
Let your Indulgence ſet me free. Exit.

The Scene, an vn-inhabited Iſland

Names of the Actors.

Alonſo, K. of Naples:
Sebaſtian his Brother.
Proſpero, the right Duke of Millaine.
Anthonio his brother, the vſurping Duke of Millaine.
Ferdinand, Son to the King of Naples.
Gonzalo, an honeſt old Councellor.
Adrian, & Franciſco, Lords.
Caliban, a ſalnage and deformed ſlaue.
Trinculo, a Ieſter.
Stephano, a drunken Butler.
Maſter of a Ship.
Boate-Swaine.
Marriners.
Miranda, daughter to Proſpero.
Ariell, an ayrie ſpirit.
Iris, *Ceres*, *Iuno*, *Nymphes*, *Reapers* } *Spirits.*

FINIS.

THE

Figure 75. The final page of *The Tempest* in the *First Folio* (1623) (Hinman 1968)

Over the last three decades, an increasing number of studies has acknowledged the importance of scrutinising the editorial processes underlying the printing of Renaissance texts in a movement which has been dubbed *New Textualism* or *New Philology* (Farmer 2002:159, 161). In several articles, essay collections (McLeod 1988, Bornstein and Williams 1993, Erne and Kidnie 2004) and monographs (Tribble 1993, Marcus 1996, Kastan 2001) supporters of this movement have drawn attention to the "uncertainties that now revolve around the texts of Shakespeare and his contemporaries" (Dickson 2003:43). They have called for an 'unediting' of text, or for a critical appreciation of texts in the physical shape in which they were designed at a certain time,[73] yet their scholarship has rarely assumed the extreme form Gary Taylor describes as "a radical stripping away of editorial encrustation" in order to rely entirely "upon photographic facsimiles of the earliest extant texts" (Taylor 1993:123). More often, a genuine attempt has been made to enrich critical readings of texts by paying tribute to the editing and printing processes underlying their making.

With respect to *The Tempest*, the fruitfulness of such an approach has been proven by Stephen Orgel's fascinating discussion of the physical representation of poetry and prose in the text (1988), by Leah S. Marcus' reflections on the 'blue-eyed witch' Sycorax (1996:1-27), or by Jonathan Goldberg's commentary on the *Folio*'s inadvertent gender swap in "the son / He [sic!] did litter there" (1.2.283-84) (2004:49). However, despite these laudable efforts by some individuals, the overall impact of such readings – if measured by the enormous critical output on *The Tempest* in general – appears relatively minor. Most critics still adhere to the view that to arrive at a closer understanding of *The Tempest*, familiarity with its allegedly 'unproblematic' (one and only) text in the *First Folio* is no prerequisite. However, such complacency is very dangerous, for it deprives the reader of interpretations which may be only recreated when the text is appreciated in its original visual form. Before proceeding to close-read the making of Caliban as "a deformed and salvage slave", though, it will be necessary to review in brief how specialists have assessed the editing processes underlying the *Tempest* in general.

The opening plays of the *Folio*, including *The Tempest*, are believed to have been prepared for print by the scribe Ralph Crane (1555?-1632?), who also provided clean copies for a variety of plays by Jonson, Middleton, Massinger, Fletcher and Webster.[74] Crane is unanimously credited with having prepared the printer's copy for the *Folio*'s first four plays (*The Tempest*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Measure for Measure*), for *The Winter's Tale*, and for further plays which have been recently added to this list. They include certainly *Othello*, and perhaps also *Cymbeline* (Honigmann 1997:315-67, Howard-Hill 2002:151).[75] Crane appears to have been a particularly diligent scribe, who 'improved' on the material he received, and who as a rule of thumb

[73] Further references to recent articles continuing the research reflected in these studies are offered by Dickson (2003:43).
[74] During an eight-year time span (from 1617 to 1625), Crane transcribed between twenty-two and twenty-five plays by these different playwrights (Howard-Hill 2002:150).
[75] Crane's involvement with *Twelfth Night*, which has been claimed by the editor of the New Cambridge edition, appears more doubtful (Howard-Hill 2002:151).

added rather than deleted information, mostly in order to render the texts more accessible to the reader (Jowett 1983:110). Crane's influence comes particularly strongly to the fore in the stage directions of *The Tempest*, which are the most elaborate in the entire *Folio* (Roberts 1980:214). Unlike the stage directions in other plays, they do not merely "prescribe action" but contain descriptions "which sound more like an account of what happened onstage than an author's advisory notes for production" (Roberts 1980:214). Thus, the *Folio* notes the entrance of "severall strange shapes" accompanied by "solemne and strange Musicke" (TLN 1535-36; 3.3.18-20), describes how a table vanishes "with a quient [quaint] device" (TLN 1584; 3.3.52), and announces the arrival of "certaine Reapers (properly habited)" (TLN 1805; 4.1.138) who subsequently "heavily vanish" (TLN 1808, 4.1.142).[76]

Yet, rather strangely, in these and many more instances, the directions do not offer proper guidance on how a particular effect may be achieved. Rich in highly unspecific adjectives and adverbs, they "are almost useless as advice for production[,] but give some descriptive flavor for a reader" (Roberts 1980:215-16). Obviously, the almost "literary quality" of some of these "conspicuously ornamental" directions would have been missed by a stage audience, but not by a readership (Jowett 1983:110), and some directions are even counterproductive when faithfully followed on stage. The premature stage direction "Juno descends" (TLN 1730-31, 4.1.72), for instance, would leave the goddess suspended in the air thirty lines before the characters surrounding her actually take note of her (TLN 1763, 4.1.101).[77] As these stage directions exemplify, Crane did not cater for producers of the play but for a readership which would appreciate his literary style and which would remain undisturbed by minor lapses, or the vagueness of stage instructions. Given the considerable influence Crane seems to have exerted when transcribing *The Tempest*, T.H. Howard-Hill has called for a reappraisal of Crane, who should not be regarded as a simple scribe, but as "the first person to confront the problems of translating Shakespeare's plays from the stage to the study", and therefore as "Shakespeare's earliest editor" (Howard-Hill 1992:129).

Crane's influence is also reflected on the *Folio* page reproduced above. One line which is almost certainly a Crane addition is the stage direction *Exeunt omnes*, which modern editions have unanimously replaced with *Exeunt* [*all but Prospero*], on the assumption that if all actors *including* Prospero left the stage, an audience unacquainted with the play might very well assume the performance to be ended, and could with a premature applause destroy the power of Prospero's epilogue (Wells and Taylor 1987:616). Similar doubts of authenticity also overshadow the "Names of the Actors", which most probably represent an editorial addition for several reasons. First of all, lists of characters such as the one supplied for *The Tempest* are a rarity in the *Folio*. Out of the 35 plays, only seven feature a list of characters. More significantly still, five of these seven lists appear with

[76] The linear line numbering corresponds to the one provided in the Norton facsimile (Hinman 1968). A detailed discussion of these and more similar instances is offered by Roberts (1980:214-16) and Jowett (1983:111-13).
[77] Scholarly attempts to resolve the contradictions involved in the "Iuno descends" direction are discussed in detail by Jowett (1983:115-18).

plays transcribed by Crane (*The Tempest*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Winter's Tale* and *Othello*).[78] It appears highly likely, then, that Crane supplied the "Names of the Actors" on his own initiative in order to render the text more attractive to the reader.

Furthermore, this list of characters occurs on a page with a highly unusual layout which is unique in the entire *Folio*. It does not actually *follow* the text of the play, as usually is the case, but has been situated *next to* Prospero's Epilogue, even though there would have been sufficient space at the bottom of the page to opt for a more conventional, strictly linear layout. This spacial arrangement of Crane's page, as unusual as it is, seems to encode meaning, especially since Crane is known to have been sensitive to the visual representation of text. The so-called "massed entries", which appear in some plays (but not in *The Tempest*), were a "neo-classical" innovation of Crane's, designed to "garnis[h] the dramatic text with the literary authority of antiquity" (Wells and Taylor 1987:22). If Crane cared for the visuality of text, then the remarkable juxtaposing of Prospero's epilogue with the "Name of the Actors" also does not seem accidental.

One simple and plausible explanation for such a textual arrangement is that Crane meant to signal an affinity between the epilogue and the list of roles, which do of course have one thing in common: they are both part of Prospero's voice. It should be noted that the characters are neither listed in order of appearance nor in terms of importance, but in a ranking reflecting Prospero's perspective. It commences with the just rulers followed by their usurpers (Alonso and Sebastian, Prospero and Antonio, respectively), and continues with the loyal subjects (Ferdinand, Gonzalo, Adrian, Francisco), followed by the disloyal ones (Caliban, Trinculo, Stephano), and finally by those entirely under Prospero's power who never seriously threaten his authority (the mariners, Miranda, the spirits). Such an arrangement, which reflects a preoccupation with the theme of establishing patriarchal rule on the island, certainly emulates Prospero's viewpoint, yet much less so Miranda's or Ferdinand's, let alone Caliban's or Ariel's perspective. What is more, the language pervading the descriptions also mimics Prospero's voice. Sebastian, who plots against Alonso, is rather strangely not identified as a usurper, yet Antonio is, in the longest description pertaining to any character: "Anthonio his brother, the usurping Duke of Millaine". The curious spelling of *Millaine*, othographically related to *villain*,[79] economically highlights a preoccupation with the reestablishing of power, which also runs through the characterisation of Caliban as "a salvage and deformed slave". *Slave* is of course Prospero's favourite epithet for Caliban, and he alone uses the term of abuse.[80] There is truly no question, then, that

[78] One further play by Crane, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, lacks such a list, and *Henry 5*, which went through the hands of another scribe, features a very elaborate one. The absence of a list with *The Merry Wives of Windsor* may have to do with considerations of space. The play finishes close to the bottom of the page, and the scribe may have been unwilling to sacrifice an entire page for this purpose. *Cymbeline*, which some critics also attribute to Crane, yet whose status needs to be confirmed (Howard-Hill 2002:151), features no such list.

[79] The use of the spelling *Millaine* is consistent throughout the *Folio* (Kermode 1954:2n.5).

[80] Prospero's usages of *slave* all occur in the play's second scene (1.2.311, 1.2.316, 1.2.322, 1.2.347, 1.2.377). The exception to the rule is the famous *Abhorred slave*-speech (1.2.347), which the *Folio* ascribes to Miranda, but many critics and editors since Dryden and Davenant's edition have attributed to Prospero. Regardless of who is uttering that particular phrase, it does

Prospero's voice is spilling over into the characterisation of Caliban in the "Names of the Actors"; what remains to be debated, though, is the process by which it arrives there.

Possibly, Crane was, like the vast majority of critics after him, so much taken in by Prospero's voice that he parrots the magician's idiom without taking into consideration the counterevidence the play provides: Caliban's legitimate claim to the island, his frustration at being coerced into an unfree status, Prospero's and Miranda's assertion of Caliban's anthropogenic status, his poetic gifts. Alternatively, Crane may intend to state one seminal fact about *The Tempest*: that properly speaking, it is not a play, but a narrative orchestrated by one single voice, belonging to Prospero. Just as the literary stage directions lend the play a narrative touch, so too the final page clearly manifests – in capitalised letters – that Prospero's epilogue represents an integral part of the play, *together* with the "Names of the Actors", and that the ending of the play (*FINIS*) follows later. The final page thus truly disrupts the play in a multiple sense, raising questions about the positioning of Prospero (character or author?) and about the entire setting of the action on stage, that is, whether the events ought to be situated within or outside Prospero's mind.

If Caliban's Ham-like fall is rooted in Prospero's imagination, then the 'deformed' status of Caliban is also Prospero's construct. Prospero's double role as maker and as beholder of the play then reenacts nothing less than a continuous reflection on the construction of a discourse of difference which has been analysed at length in this study. Prospero's mood, as we know, is sombre, and contemplating the dynamics of colonial encounters does not agree with him. It renders him impatient, rash, bitter, incensed, anxious, apprehensive, uneasy, disturbed. Fearing the 'fool-like' savage (Caliban), the rival (Ferdinand), and the inconstancy of woman (in Miranda), Prospero wishes that "his [devi]ls now are ended" (4.1.148), to quote from the provocative title of a recent article (Lucking 2000). However, it is not the establishing of power which troubles him (for no-one can oppose his physical and psychological mastery); rather, it is the impossibility of proving patriarchal colonial power to be a just, 'natural', mutually beneficial system of government which disturbs him.

Of all Renaissance plays dealing with 'colonial discourse', *The Tempest* is probably the one which polarises the most, and this for a good reason. Whether we side with Prospero (and pretend it is all 'play') or expose Prospero (and read it as *his* 'book') is an important decision to take which will also determine the interpretation of the work's attitude towards the symbolism it employs. Those trusting Prospero's voice will rediscover the leopard, the leper and the lecher in Caliban; those seeing through the texture of Prospero's voice and through Crane's text will experience the meanness and enormity underlying the fallacious myth of the spotted colonial object. Either way, the reader senses that Shakespeare here lays bare the fears and anxieties of an age which editors and critics since Ralph

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express Prospero's idiom rather than Miranda's. Notice that Prospero also addresses Ariel with "slave" (1.2.272), but tones it down by alternating it with the term *servant* (1.2.188).

Crane have systematically concealed by their scholarly endeavours. An uncritical worshipper of the *Folio* will invariably read *The Tempest* as 'a Romance', without questioning such a classification; those who are more critically-minded will justly wonder why the play may not be read either as history, tragedy, or indeed as comedy, just as *Othello* has been rewritten as a 'farce' by postcolonial critics. Whatever the outcome of such a reassessment, there is no question that the subtleties of *The Tempest* will only be exposed by a close scrutiny of the *Folio* and its various textual levels. It seems high time, then, to abandon a blind trust in critical editions, and once more approach *The Tempest* by "[s]eizing the Book".[81]

[81] With apologies to Ania Loomba, whose article "Seizing the Book" (1999) is alluded to here.

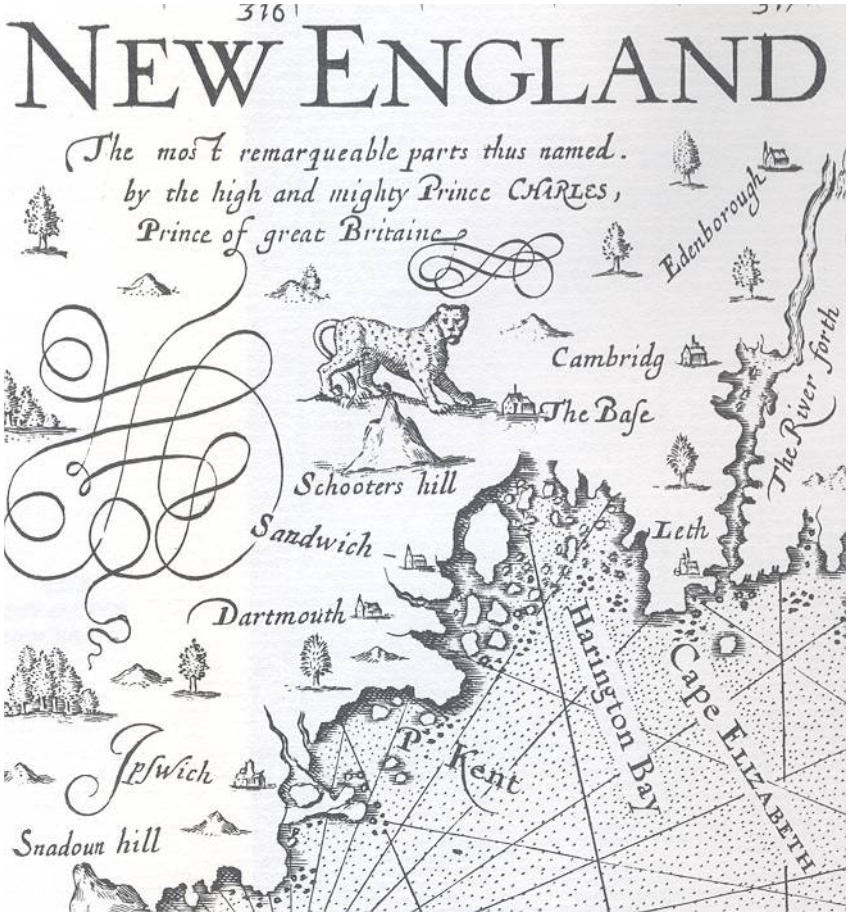

Figure 76. Excerpt from John Smith's Map of Virginia in his *Advertisements for the Planters of New England* (1631)

4. Coda: The Spotted in Colonial Discourse

Vincere est vivere [John Smith's motto to his coat of arms]
(Smith 1631:17)

The manner in which the symbolic code analysed above feeds into the construction of colonial realities may be best gleaned from John Smith's *Advertisements for the Planters of New England* (1631). Despite its practical orientation, Smith's guideline for prospective planters is notable for the contemplative, often biblical metaphors it employs. New England is repeatedly compared to a newly-discovered Eden, and on the map accompanying Smith's booklet secular *Edinburgh* is refashioned into an *Edenburgh*, or, literally, into a city of Paradise. Like many contemporary texts, Smith wistfully compares the heavy physical labour of the Virginia planters to the toils of Adam and Eve ("[the] first to begin this innocent worke to plant the earth") and of Noah and his kin, who in Smith's words "began […] the second plantation" (1631:10).[1] However, Smith's *New England* or *Virginia* is, despite its labelling, not experienced as prelapsarian bliss, but as an Eden corrupted. Far from being uninhabited, the land only becomes English property after being annexed with force. In order to justify such a territorial expansion, Smith also labels New England "Canaan", or the territory seized by the Israelites,[2] and suggests that, when taking possession of American soil, the English merely follow the examples of "[t]he Hebrews, Lacedemonians, Goths, Grecians, Romans, and the rest [of nations]" who have "inlarge[d] their Territories" and "inrich[ed] their subjects" in the past (1631:11).

While the English are still struggling to ward off "uncivilized" and "most barbarous" natives from Jamestown, they already begin to exploit indigenous manpower when the occasion arises.[3] Moreover, they cast an envious glance at the incomparably more effective forms of colonial government practised by the Spaniards in their New World dominions. Not without admiration, Smith writes:

> Who is it that knowes not what a small handfull of Spaniards in the West Indies subdued millions of the inhabitants, so depopulating those Countries they conquered, that they are glad to buy Negroes in Affrica at a great rate, in Countries rarre remote from them, which although they bee as idle and as devilish people as any in the world, yet they cause them quickly to bee their best servants; notwithstanding, there is for every four or five naturall Spaniards, two or three hundred Indians and Negros, and in Virginia and New-England more English than Salvages (Smith 1631:30-31).

Impressed by the efficacy of the Spanish empire upon which "the Sunne never sets" (1631:37), Smith deplores the fact "that English men should not doe as much" as the Iberian colonisers (1631:31). Even though refraining from explicitly encouraging planters to emulate the ruthless practices of the

[1] See also Smith's simile comparing the publication of his *Sea-Grammar* to Noah's building of the ark (1631:26).
[2] For a contemporary comment of the Israelite annexation of Canaan, see Stephen Bateman's translation of Bartholomew Anglicus: "Chananea is a Country in Siria, that was after the floud in the possession of the children of Chanaan, that was the sonne of Cham. […] [A]nd […] by bidding of our Lord, ye children of Israel put them out, and occupied their lands, as Isidore saith" (1582:15.37.221r).
[3] See John Smith's boast how he "revenge[d] my imprisonment upon the harmlesse innocent Salvages [i.e. Native Americans], who by my cruelty I forced to feed me with their contribution, and to send any[one] [who] offended my idle humour to Iames towne to punish at mine owne discretion; or keepe their Kings and subjects in chaines, and make them worke" (1631:4).

Spaniards, Smith clearly sees the enslavement of Native Americans as a viable option. Since they are "such a few, and so dispersed […] [,] it were nothing in a short time to bring them to labour and obedience" (1631:31), Smith asserts, and, lest someone should feel inclined to sympathise with them, dexterously encodes their barbarity in a symbol. Next to the larger settlement conspicously christened *The Base*, Smith places a giant leopard looming large over the houses, embodying the various kinds of *debased* creatures threatening the purity of New England.[4]

Typically for colonial discourse, Smith's leopard may simultaneously stand for Native Americans living near Jamestown, for a settlement of Africans shipped over the Atlantic, or even for apostate Europeans 'debasing' New England. Such a multiple identification makes perfect sense within the socio-political context at the time, given that the first colonies jointly relied on indentured European servants, on Native Americans and on Africans, whereof the latter group was gradually phased out by the two former ones (Blackburn 1997a:235-243).[5] Thus, on Smith's map, the allegorical leopard appears as a mere vehicle which is neither related to a permanent signified, nor bound to any particular locality. As a matter of fact, the spotted feline is not even native to New England, but to Africa and Asia only. Its displacement once more underscores the fact that early modern colonial discourse often lacks literal, semantic cohesion, and therefore must resort to more powerful meanings on the level of symbolism and allegory. For the purpose of marking the subaltern body, colonial discourse exploits images of spottedness which are polysemous and malleable. Figures like Cain, Ham, Canaan or Eve and images of bestiality, disease and lechery coexist in symbiotic relationships which mutually ascertain each other's reliability. The power invested in such symbols rests first and foremost on their ability to subsist in a state of constant oscillation with alternative allegorical shapes. Their meanings are never fixed, certainty is suspended by probability, scientific proof gives way to axioms and proverbial wisdom, colonial subjects themselves are replaced by myth, and knowledge is distilled in a secret code.

On John Smith's map, the brutal immediacy of this silencing of the colonial subject is eclipsed by a lofty rhetoric which celebrates the seizing of new territories and new lands as a noble chivalric enterprise. On his coat of arms, Smith proudly displays three Moorish heads, which stand for the successful subjugation of non-Europeans, as Smith's motto *vincere est vivere* ('to conquer is to live') explains. Below Smith's own portrait in the map's top left-hand corner, a panegyric praises his achievements in "[o]verthrow[ing] […] Salvages, much Civilliz'd by thee". And, lest anyone should find fault with the ruthless ways in which the first colonialists rebuild their disturbing *New* England in the Americas, the coat of arms of this new territory is accompanied by the chivalric motto of the

[4] Notice that the symbol of the leopard may have been borrowed from earlier maps, such as the Spanish world map by Cabot (1544), which shows a spotted cat next to a native dressed in a striped cloth (Quinn, Quinn and Hillier 1979:1.Fig.56).
[5] Some early colonisers actually considered several options of enslaving different kinds of people, as Emanuel Downing, a member of the Massachusetts Company, who in the late 1630s wrote to a friend of his: "And I suppose you know verie well how wee shall maynteyne 20 Moores cheaper than one English servant" (Blackburn 1997a:238).

English crown, “Hony soit qui mal y pense” (‘shame to him who thinks evil of it’), a motto which also prominently appears on other specimens of early modern colonial desire, such as on the frontispiece to Richard Knolles’ *Generall Historie of the Turkes* (1603) (Barbour 2003:20). On Smith’s map, then, colonial conquest is not chronicled in a plain narrative, but encoded in symbols of purity and corruption, bestiality and humanity, civilisation and savagery, which impose the status of inferiority on a range of different non-European ethnicities.

This uncanny quality of colonial discourse to vacillate between different conditions, states and settings also comes to the fore in Shakespeare’s *Tempest*, in which Prospero’s isle alternates between the three continents bordering on the ‘Ethiopian’ Ocean. Caliban is simultaneously the African, the Native American, the Oriental, the Gypsy and the Irishman, and he is alternatingly cursed for the Falls of Cain, Ham and Canaan. As has been repeatedly pointed earlier, the three Shakespearean plays analysed in this study may be understood as commentaries upon archetypal narratives aiming at legitimising the annexation of foreign lands and the oppression of native populations. John Smith’s key concern, the ‘debasing’ of the enemies of the Old and the New England, is also central to *Titus Andronicus*, *Othello*, and *The Tempest*. Even though situating European-African encounters outside England or areas controlled by the English (such as in ancient Rome, early modern Venice, classical Carthage or colonial Cartagena), the subtext of the expanding English empire is constantly in the offing.

The manner in which these plays project classical and biblical allegories upon new, forbidding worlds may be best understood via Bernard Spivack’s concept of a ‘hybrid play’. In his classic study on *The Allegory of Evil in Shakespeare*, Spivack analyses a series of sixteenth-century texts “which deserve to be called *hybrid*, or *transitional*, because in them exists the open fusion of two radically different dramatic methods, the abstract and the concrete” (1958:253). The kind of alternation Spivack describes between spiritual medieval allegories and secular Renaissance narratives is a characteristic feature which seems to have been systematically overlooked in critical appreciations of these plays. Biblical narratives in particular seem have fallen into oblivion, hence the touch of novelty to the ‘rediscovery’ of Adam and Eve, Noah, Ham and Canaan, and Aaron in the plays close-read above. Likewise, medieval myths of the leopard, the hydrus or the hybrid, which this study has unearthed, point towards an intricate web of popular lore which has been gradually eroded since the Enlightenment.

Often these images are employed to transform complex transcultural forms of interaction into unambiguous, stable, ethnocentric formulae. Conversely, familiar patterns of good and evil are projected onto a fast-expanding world map in order to consolidate a threatened Eurocentric episteme. The code of the spotted analysed in this study, just like the legal codes subsequently built on it,

simplifies, polarises, structures, orders. It operates in a binary mode which creates the illusion of truth, logic and consistency, while deliberately misrepresenting human nature. The emergence of a polarised perception of ethnicity is closely related to what Theodore W. Allen has called *The Invention of the White Race* (1994), that is, the identification of Europeanness with 'whiteness', a process which takes place in the 16th and 17th centuries. The fictitious nature of this distinction, which is still nowadays sometimes misunderstood as a 'natural' divide, becomes most clearly apparent if one considers the absurd shape it assumes once these early forms of social segregation are codified by law from the mid-17th century onwards. In the *Naturalisation Act* of 1790, for example, the right of American citizenship is restricted to "whites", a category which is said to "constitutes a very indefinite description of a class of persons, *where none can be said to be literally white*" (Harris 1993:1744 n.162, emphasis added). And an American judicial verdict of 1866 spells out this paradox even further by stating that "[t]here are white men as dark as mulattoes, and there are pure-blooded albino Africans as white as the whitest Saxons" (Harris 1993:1740). The American legal concept of 'whiteness', in other words, is not based on objective, visual criteria, but on ethnicity and descent, since it even excludes those non-Europeans who fulfil the criterion of 'whiteness' beyond expectation. It strictly separates the biological phenomenon of a white phenotype from what Cheryl L. Harris has called "whiteness as property", that is, the privileged status attached to an epistemological concept of 'European' whiteness defined via 'blood' alone (Harris 1993:1739-40). The clash between these two concepts results in most absurd constellations, as in the above-cited case of albinos who *look* white in 'reality', but not in the eyes of the law. Even though these later developments are arguably irrelevant for the understanding of early modern colonial discourse, it is crucial to note that the cornerstones of this epistemological concept of 'whiteness' are already laid during the early modern period.

Just as the validity of 'whiteness' as a meaningful ontological category is undermined by the realities of human physiology, already from the very beginning of the age of 'discoveries',[6] so too Western symbolic representations of ethnic and somatic difference are highly volatile, mainly on account of their ambiguity. If one turns back to medieval sources, one finds puzzling juxtapositions, such as evil leopards or lustful lepers which may be counterread as Christ-like panthers or as Lazar-like sufferers in Christ, respectively. The Renaissance tends to eliminate these double entendres by reducing the meaning of particoloured patterns to the connotation of evil. As the findings of this study suggest, the main incentive for eliminating positive reinterpretations of hybrid patterns is directly linked to the cult status these patterns possess in non-European cultures. Indigenous natives on various continents ornate their bodies with tattoos, scarifications and paint, and thereby – from a Western perspective – identify themselves with the mark of the Barbarian. By deliberately misconstruing these modes of positive self-identification as a sign of innate corruption, Renaissance texts foster a myth of

[6] Notice for example that exotic albinism is a phenomenon which is encountered as early as 1508 by Spaniards on the San Blas Islands off Panama's Caribbean coast. The native population of these islands features a very high rate of albinism, varying between 1 in 140 and 1 in 240 inhabitants, according to estimates by 20th century anthropologists (Witkop 1975:48). On the history of Western responses to exotic albinism, see Martin (2002).

monstrous hybridity which increases an already-extant cultural bias, and effectively cordon off colonial subjects from a priviliged status. However, this systemic stigmatising of the spotted is not always successful. As demonstrated on the basis of Brueghel's and Momper's *The Baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch* (Fig. 53), the code of the spotted fails when overwritten by alternative myths operating with the same visual markers.

Furthermore, some contemporary voices also question and undermine the code of the spotted, though only within certain culturally-defined limits. One source scrutinising the Western reading of spots from a more critical vantage point is Walter Ralegh's *History of the World* (1614). In Ralegh's ambitious chronicle, the origin of humankind is retold as a sequence of biblical Falls (Satan's, Adam and Eve's, Cain's, Ham's, Babel's, Sodom and Gomorrha's), which blend in with the secular Falls of Troy, of Carthage, and of Rome. Ralegh displays an ambivalent attitude towards the reliability of the Fall as an accurate model for historicising the past. On the one hand, he regards the biblical genealogy after Noah and the fall of Babel as a valid explanation for the dispersal of humankind in biblical times. Then again, Ralegh stumbles over numerous cases in which the rhetoric of purity and impurity clashes with a 'rational' rewriting of world history. Ralegh is particularly concerned how particoloured patterns and skin colour may lead a faithful (natural) historian onto a false track:

> And […] by discovering […] strange landes, wherein there are found divers beastes and birdes differing in colour or stature from those of these Northerne parts, it may be supposed by a superficiall consideration, that all those which weare red and pyed skinnes, or feathers, are differing from those that are lesse painted, and were plaine russet or black[.] [However,] they are much mistaken that so thinke. And for my owne opinion, I finde no difference, but onely in magnitude, betweene the Cat of Europe, and the Ounce of India; […] For if colour of magnitude made a difference of Species, then were the Negro's, which we call the Black-mores *non animalia rationalia* not men, but some kinde of strange beastes: and so the Giants of the South America should bee of an other kinde, then the people of this part of the World. (Ralegh 1614:1.7.9.111-112).

Voicing his reservations against "superficiall" readings which blindly categorise native creatures and exotic beasts on the basis of outward appearance alone, Ralegh deals a heavy blow to the Western codes of otherness. By adopting the Augustinian view that also purportedly 'monstrous' inhabitants of remote regions must be classified as human, Ralegh establishes a common ground for a shared 'rationality' across the colour line which the rhetoric of the spotted systemically denies.

The same scepticism towards the authority of symbols of the spotted is also expressed on Ralegh's frontispiece, which displays the globe being framed by two female allegories, *fama bona*, a white spotless creature, and *fama mala*, who is disfigured by heavy black spots covering her entire body) (Fig. 91). The writing of histories, the frontispiece implies, is principally determined by the opposing forces of just merit and infamous slander, and the medium upon which this history is 'imprinted' is the human body. That this historiography of praise and defamation applies particularly to the civilization of New World(s) is manifested by the fact that the biblical landscapes the history imagines are inspired by the tropical regions of Guiana, Mexico and Virginia which Ralegh had explored during Elizabeth's reign (Greenblatt 1973:137). Ralegh for instance identifies the tree of knowledge as "the Indian fig tree" (1614:1.4.§2-§3.67-70), and thereby confirms a stereotyping of

'corrupted continents' which is fairly common in early modern discourse. Then again, Ralegh's recognition of spotlessness and spottedness as mere tropes acknowledges the constructedness of such discourse, and reflects an ambivalence between trusting and doubting a rhetoric of purity and danger which is also topicalised in the Shakespearean texts close-read above.

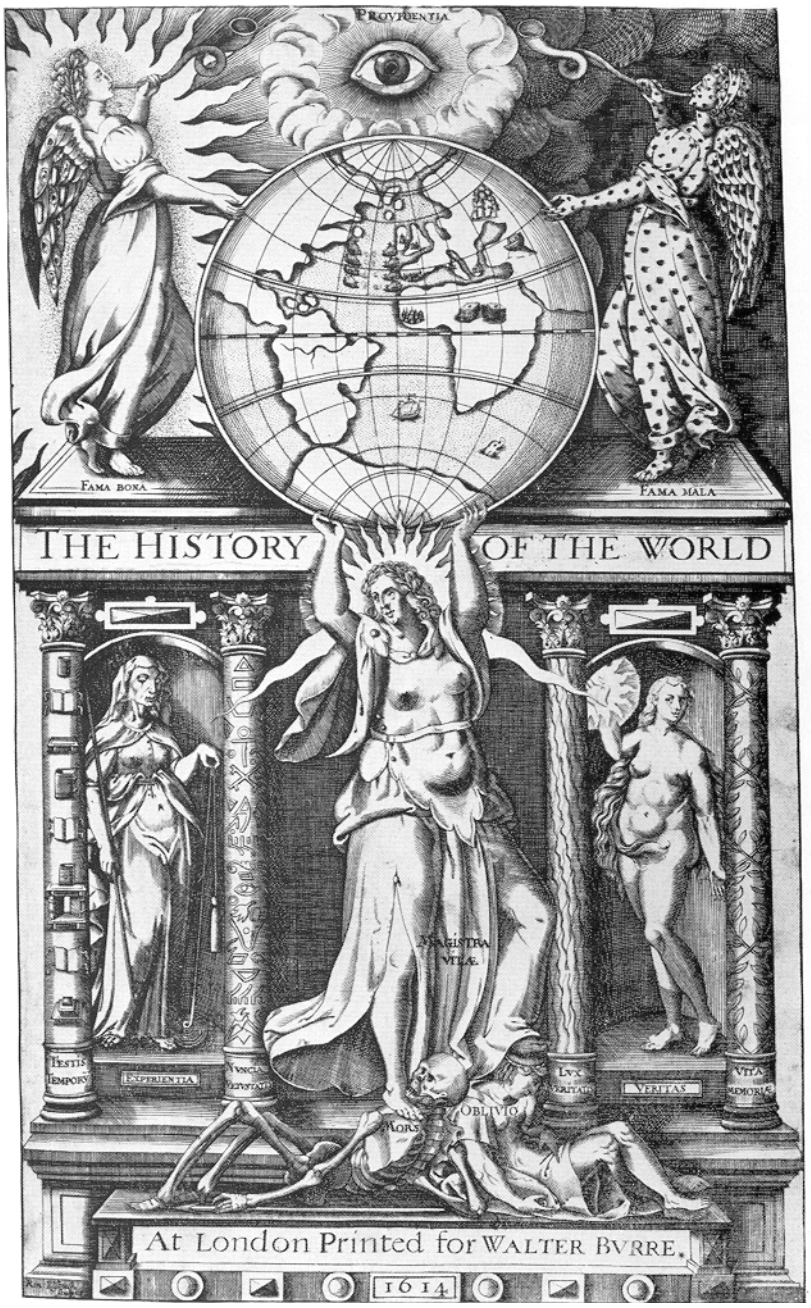

Figure 91. Frontispiece to Walter Ralegh's *History of the World* (1614) (Patrides 1971:iii)

In its entirety, the close-reading of the three Shakespearean plays has revealed an indeterminacy comparable to Ralegh's. Whereas *Titus Andronicus* resumes the common stereotyping of the African as a fallen creature corrupting a spotless Rome, *Othello* and *The Tempest* distance themselves from a straightforward exploitation of such symbolism. While Aaron ostensibly relishes

the role in which he is cast, Othello testifies to the agony of someone directing such defamatory discourse against himself. Spellbound by Iago's 'medicine', Othello lends credence to a pathologising of his own body, and succumbs to a physical fall which partly confirms the Renaissance stereotyping of Africans as unstable, effeminate melancholics. *The Tempest* goes even further by presenting Caliban not only as Prospero's victim, but also as Prospero's creation. As the semi-authorial status of the narrator Prospero indicates, Caliban's 'deformity' is a mere construct imposed on a body whose voice is systematically suppressed. The play thus not only shows the 'spotted' status of Caliban to be in the eye of the beholder; it also documents how the bestialising, the pathologising and the hypersexualising of the non-European body emanates from a mindset which may be regarded as a pathological condition in its own right.

The modes in which *Othello* and *The Tempest* challenge the symbolism of the spotted differ from the critiques of such rhetoric theorised earlier in this study. The plays neither openly refute nor parody the construction of 'otherness', nor question the reliability of such discourse as other contemporary texts, such as Montaigne's essays, do. The reason for this is probably related to the difference in literary form. Performing otherness on stage necessitates an exposing of physical difference which inevitably aligns a dramatic production with a stagings of 'aliens' and human 'monsters' as it was customarily practised in Elizabethan and Jacobean showhouses or in the marketplace. Realising *Othello* or *The Tempest* on stage, therefore, always risks reconstructing, at least in part, an exploitation of visuality which the spoken text undermines. However, the subsequent translation of Shakespeare's texts from the stage to the page once again facilitates a more critical reception of imagined visual properties, and helps removing the thick texture 'denigrating' the non-European, yet only if readers 'unedit' the supposedly 'authoritative' texts they have been presented with. Seen from such a critical perspective, Caliban and Othello appear as individuals both shaped and 'misshapen' by symbols of the spotted. The plays in which they appear reflect an awareness which not only foreshadows a later, more explicit, criticism of the Black Atlantic world, but which also pioneers texts more centrally concerned with the making of the monstrous.[7]

[7] I am thinking here of texts such as Voltaire's essay on the public display of an African albino in Paris (1745), or of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). One of the most stimulating studies on the making of the monstrous in modern English and American culture – and thus a 'natural' continuation of the argument proposed here – is Charles D. Martin's *The White African American Body: A Cultural and Literary Exploration* (2002).

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Appendix 1: Terms for Africans Early Modern English

African
< Lat. *Africanus* < ?
The standard explanation of the term from Isidore to the Early Modern Period as a Greek compound *A-phrike*, meaning 'without cold', is obviously a folk etymology. Possible 'true' etymologies include (1) Latin *afer*, plural *ifri*, the Hamitic name of a Berber tribe, (2) Arabic *afar* ('dust', 'earth'), (3) *Ifrikos*, mythical son of biblical Goliath and (4) Punic faraqa ('share', 'colony'). The last suggestion is supported by the fact that Carthaginians applied the term themselves for their territory (Room 1994: 13).

In the Renaissance, *Africa* could encode different meanings, but it stood first and foremost for the ancient Roman provinces of Carthage (or *Africa Vetus*, conquered in 146 BC), Numidia (*Africa Nova*, 46 BC) or both (united in 29 BC by Augustus under the name *Africa*). Before the circumnavigation of the continent, *Africa* was mostly used in this 'Roman' sense as denoting the northern ('known') shore in contrast to the vast ('unknown') southern region of 'Ethiopia'. The distinction is e.g. made in *Layamon's Brut* (c1205): "Of Ethi[o]pe wes [th]e an, [th]e o[th]er wes an Aufrican" (line 27501, *OED* "African" A.1a.). Accordingly, the *MED* does not define *African* as an inhabitant of the continent, but as "[a] native of North Africa or the Roman province of Africa" ("Affrican").

In the 16th and 17th centuries, *African* as a human epithet seems to have been rather scarce, and where it occurs, the term is mostly understood in a historical sense, e.g. as a reference to the Donatists in North Africa in late antiquity (More. *Confutation* (1532) Schuster 1973:29; see also *OED* "African" A.1a.). Instances where the term is applied to sub-Saharan Africans or to African slaves are conspicuously absent in the Renaissance (see e.g. Barthélémy 1987:13), and the first such usage the *OED* offers dates from 1700 ("African" A.1c.). In Shakespeare, *African* or *Afric* are also used in the medieval or Renaissance sense: as a reference to a former Roman province (Tunis/Carthage in *TMP* 2.1.67), as the setting of classical Greek myth (*TRO* 1.3.363), or as a desert housing monstrous creatures (*CYM* 1.1.168) and storing untold riches (*2H4* 5.3.93).

Black
In Renaissance texts *black* is only used as an adjective in combination with a noun (e.g. *black man* (*TGV* 5.2.12)), and virtually never occurs in a nominalised form, as in modern usage. One of the earliest known instances where *black* is used as a noun is in Richard Jobson's narrative on the exploration of the river Gambia, where he claims that when hunting elephants "my Blacks would always tremble, and runne away" (1623:142) (see also *OED* "black", n. 6).

Black(a)moor
The compound black(a)moor is an oddity which has but insufficiently been explained, both morphologically and semantically. The *a* between *black* and *moor* could derive from a pronounced final *–e* in *blacke* in the early forms of "blacke moryan" and "blake More" (*OED* "blackamorian", "blackamoor" 1). In terms of meaning, *blackamoor* appears tautological, since it is mostly not used in opposition to the 'white' or 'tawny moor' but to the 'white' European. *Blackamoor*, then, places a particularly strong emphasis on colour, like 'perfect Negro', 'true Negro' or 'veritable Negro' in later writing. The stress on the 'blackness' of the *Moor* seems particularly noteworthy when compared to the medieval *Moor*, who was often conceived of as 'blue' rather than 'black', being 'othered' mostly on religious and cultural grounds rather on the basis of skin colour.
see also: Moor

Blueman

< ON *blámaðr* (‘blueman’) (*OED* “bloman”)

Blueman (also spelled *blewman* and *bloman*), a frequent variant of *Ethiope* in Middle English, appears in source text until the mid-sixteenth century. The oddity that medieval texts call ‘blue’ what modern sources label ‘black’ hinges on the fact that at the time *blue* covered a wider spectrum than today, including also darker shades. Similar divergences from the present Western ‘norm’ have been observed among non-European cultures, as e.g. with the Oromo in Southern Ethiopia, who refer to the daytime sky as ‘black’, since they have no word for ‘blue’ (Cerulli 1922:132.36). Kelly’s speculation that *blueman* may ultimately derive from blue bodies in Hindu culture and art seems highly suggestive, yet has not been sufficiently substantiated by solid evidence (1993:49-52). The close association of the two colour terms has survived in the idiom *black and blue*, which in medieval texts is often applied to dark-skinned people (*OED* “black” II.13). Also, in Irish, the common term for African is still *fear gorm* (‘blue man’) (Kelly 1993:42).

In Middle English, *Blueman* often replaces *Ethiop* in literary texts, and regularly occurs in translations of Latin *aethiops* (“Of Ethiope he brohte [th]a bleomen” (*Layamon’s Brut* (c1205) 25380); “Ethyopia, bloo men londe” (Trevisa trans. Barth. Anglicus III.xxiv.73) (*OED* “bloman”)). Its wide dissemination is mirrored by the fact that it can also feature as a surname (“Ricardus Blaman” (c.1182, *MED* “bloman”)), just like *More*. The fact that *black* and *blue* were largely interchangeable in medieval times (“Blac as a bloamon” *Ancrene Riwle* (1225) 236 (*OED* “bloman”)) sheds new light on the Early Modern tendency to speak in *black* / *white* contrasts, showing it to be an ‘innovation’ of the period rather than a remnant of medieval heritage. Shakespeare, often more ‘medieval’ in spirit than contemporaries like Ben Jonson, perhaps still alludes to this older meaning of *blue* when describing Sycorax as “the blew-ey’d hag” (*TMP* 1.2.269), as the unusual spelling *blew* seems to suggest.

see also: Man of Ind

Ethiope, Ethiopian

< Lat. *Aethiops* (Glare 1982) < Gk. *Aithiops* (*aithon* ‘burn’ + *ôps* ‘face’) (Liddell and Scott 1966)

The term first occurs in Homer, standing for the inhabitants of the underworld (*Ilias* I.423-425, III.3-6, XXIII.205-207, *Odyssee* I.22-25, IV.84-89, V.283), and Greek geographers apply it to the people dwelling in the southernmost regions of the known world, i.e. sub-Saharan Africa and India, which are sometimes thought to be bridged by a landmass in the south (Huss 1996: 219, Dihle 1998:9). Next to these monstrous and fabulous ‘Ethiopians’ (Romm 1992: 49-67), Greek *aithiops* and Latin *aethiops* also may stand for Meroë (Nubia), whose dark Nilotic tribes are likewise thought to have been ‘burnt’ by the proximity to the sun.

In the *Vulgate*, Jerome translates the roughly fifty references to the biblical land of Cush (i.e. Meroë) with *Aethiopia*. In contrast to German, where Luther replaces *Aethiopia* with *Mohrenland*, all English translations predominantly stick to *Ethiopia*, thus preserving the term in its classical sense in the English tongue until the turn of the century. *Ethiope* and *Ethiopia* in Early Modern English are not to be confused with the area of present-day Ethiopia (*Ityopiya*), as in some recent studies.[1] In fact, in the English tradition *Ethiopia* designates the whole of sub-Saharan Africa *excluding* the area on the Horn of Africa, which is instead referred to as *Abyssinia* or *Prester John’s realm*, a point made succinctly by John Pory, the translator of Leo Africanus (1600) (I. 10). Occasionally, however, English sources *do* mean Ethiopia (Ityopia) when they write *Ethiopia*, as e.g. Queen Elizabeth I in her letter to the “Emperor of Ethiopia” (5th Nov 1597), which, however, never arrives (Harrison 1928:230).

‘Ethiope’ in English is full of allusions to the classical, Christian and medieval tradition. Probably the first usage occurs in *The Wonders of the East* (11th c.), an Old English translation of a

[1] Take heed of the entry “Ethiop” in Davis and Frankforter’s *The Shakespeare Name and Place Dictionary* (1995: 157) and of the article by Andreas (2002), both of which fail to distinguish between the Western and the Ethiopian tradition. For a solid discussion on this point, see Voigt’s articles on “Abyssinia” (2003a) and “Ethiopia (2003b) in the *Encyclopedia Aethiopica.*

Latin text, where the *sigel-hearwa* (‘sun-worshippers’) or *sigel-wara* (‘sun-men’) (Holthausen 1934, “-hearwa”) represent one species of Plinian monsters inhabiting the edges of the world (Campbell 1988:57-86, Upchurch 2000). Entering English through Latin and French (Stone and Rothwell 1992: 285), *Ethiope* remains together with *Moor* the standard term for Africans until the mid-16th century, when it replaced in spoken language by *Negro*. In writing, however, it survives in its classical, biblical and medieval sense, as e.g. with Shakespeare, Milton, Browning, Kipling, Conrad, Hawthorne, Melville, Dickinson, Whitman or Joyce. Also, 19th century anthropologists speak of an ’Ethiopian race’ (Van Keuren 1988: 657), whereas until the ’scramble’ Africa’s unexplored inner regions are unanimously labelled *Ethiopia interior*.

Man of Ind

< Lat. *India* < Gk. *Indos* (‘river Indus’) < Sanskrit *sindhu* (‘river’) (*OED* “India”)

That in the Early Modern Period *man of Ind* may refer not only to inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent and Native Americans and the peoples of the ‘West Indies’ but also to Africans has been repeatedly hinted at (Barthelemy 1987:6-7 and *Tempest,* Arden 3rd ed., note on 2.2.57), yet never been adequately accounted for in Shakespearean scholarship. Given that in Middle English and Early Modern English *inde* or *ynde* could also stand for the colour ‘indigo’ (Lat. *Indicum*) (Kelly 1993:42, *OED* “inde”), there is a distinct possibility that *man of Ind* may also carry the meaning ‘a person of blueish skin’.

In Greek and Roman texts, *India* and *Ethiopia* are notoriously vague and overlapping terms (Günther 1998: 968-69), due to the many parallels which seemed to connect the two areas, being equally remote from the Mediterranean, home to large rivers, the crocodile, ’sun-burnt’ people, and sometimes thought to be connected via a southern landmass (Dihle 1998:9-10). Since both sub-Saharan Africa and India were accessed via the self-same route, i.e. the Red Sea, classical itineraries (Periplus, Cosmas Indicopleustes) generally refer to the Eritrean and Somali coastline as *India ulterior* (Brakmann 1994: 5-6). In Western writing, therefore, *India* and *Ethiopia* are often confused, as e.g. with John Mandeville, who speaks of ”Ethiopians” worshipping holy (Hindu) cows (Seymour 1963:89). The miraculous transfer of the mythical ‘Prester John’ from Asia to Africa in the 14th century hinges on the same misunderstanding. Since in the Prester’s (forged) letter (c.1120) he is described as the ruler over the three Indias (Van den Brincken 1985:83), he could plausibly be displaced and ‘re-discovered’ in *India ulterior* (i.e. present-day Ethiopia) by various 14th century geographers and by 15th century Portuguese explorers (Baum 1999). In John More’s translation of Damião de Goís account ’Prester John’s land’, alias the Ethiopian kingdom, the country is referred to as India, and their king as ”the great emperour of Inde” (More 1533:title page).

In the Early Modern Period, the *man of Ind* (in the sense of ‘Indian’ or ‘indigo-coloured person’) appears rather frequently, as e.g. in Barclay’s translation of Brant’s *Ship of Fools* (1509:262r), or in the anonymous *Pilgrimage of Perfection* (1531): “Out of the chirche [th]ou blacke moryan, out of the chirche thou man of ynde” (78b, *OED* “blackamorian”). Coverdale (1535) and the Bishop’s Bible (1568) render the unchangeable Ethiopian in Jer 13:23 as a “man of Inde” (*Tempest,* Arden 3rd ed., note on 2.2.57), and Thomas Palmer’s Emblem collection (1565) – in analogy with the *Greek Anthology* (428) – speaks of whitening “the man of ynde”, not the *Ethiopian* (52). Even Richard Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations* (1599:58) preserves the same confusion when in a translation of Iohn Plano de Carpini’s 13th century account of the Tartars speaking about “Indians [who] are the blacke Saracen, which are also called Aethiopians”. Shakespeare’s “rude and savage m[e]n of Inde” (*LLL* 4.3.222) follows this tradition, which seems to die out in the early 17th century.

see also: Blueman

Moor

< Lat. *Maurus* < ?

As with *African*, the origins of the term are rather obscure. The conventional etymology, tracing it from Gk. *amauros* (‘dark’), is supported by scant evidence, and could represent a folk etymology. The

inhabitants of Lat. *Mauretania* (the suffix *–ania* meaning 'land of') might derive their name from other roots, such as Punic *mahurim* ('western'), a word which could be related to the name of *Maghreb* (Room 1994:124-25). Whatever its origin, *Maurus* soon becomes a more general term synonymous with *African* or *Punic* in Livy, Horace and Ovid (Georges 1962) and in historiography of late antiquity (Février 1985:302).

In the Middle Ages *Maurus* becomes specifically associated with the foreign conquerors of the Iberian Peninsula, and mostly stands for 'Muslim', 'unbaptised' and, ultimately, 'someone with dark skin'. Barthélémy argues that the somatically neutral Roman term became 'coloured' through a conflation with Gk. *amauros* ('dark') (1987:8-9), the exact process of which remains unclear. What is certain is that in medieval documents, *maurus* can explicitly stand for colour, as in *maurophorus* ('wearing dark clothes', 9th-c. chronicle) or in a 14th century glossary which defines *maurus* as 'someone burnt black with summer heat' (Barthélémy 1987:8). In Mandeville, *Moretane* is considered a part of *Ethiopia* whose inhabitants are of the self-same dark complexion (*OED* "Moor" 1). The *Moors* in medieval romance, such as the *Chanson de Roland*, are always unambiguously 'black', their bodily hue being a sign of the non-Christian (Mietlizki 1977:137-40, de Weever 1998).

The stereotypical medieval 'dark Muslims' are modified in the Early Modern Period, being subdivided into "whyte mores and black mores" (Andrew Boorde (1547) in *OED* "Moor" 1). The distinction, subject to great controversy in *Othello*-criticism, is first discussed in depth with Leo Africanus (1526, printed 1550, trans. Pory 1600), a North-African himself, describing various 'tawny' and 'black' nations north and south of the Sahara.[2] Also, actual contacts with North Africans, such as the famously portrayed Moroccan ambassador to Queen Elizabeth in 1600 (*Norton Shakespeare* 2092), eventually resulted in two separate stereotypes corresponding to North Africans and sub-Saharan Africans (labelled *Mohr* and *Maure* in High German). While we do find occasionally 'tawny Moors' on the Elizabethan stage (e.g. the Prince of Morocco in *MV* 2.1), the vast majority of Moors are meant to be of sub-Saharan origin. Although the myth of Shakespeare's 'light-skinned' Othello has repeatedly been shown to be rooted in 18th and 19th century stage conventions (Hunter 1967, Cowhig 1977, Collins 1996), recent readings of the 'Spanish' dimensions of the play have again made a case for a 'North African' or 'Iberian' Moor (Everett 1982, Griffin 1998).

Negro

etymology: <Span. or Port. *negro* ('black')

The term may be said to reflect the 'colonial experience' in the sense that it spreads in the early 16th century within the context of travelling, exploration and the 'middle passage', being e.g. first recorded in French in 1529 (Dubois et al. 1998: 503). The earliest known usages in English are still those from the source listed in the *OED*, i.e. Richard Eden's *Decades* (1555: 344r, 356v), one of which is particularly revealing: [T]he people whiche nowe inhabite the regions of the coast of Guinea and the mydde partes of Affrica, as Lybia the inner, and Nubia with dyvers other great and large regions abowt the same, *were in oulde tyme cauled Ethiopes and Nigrite, which we nowe caule Moores, Moorens, or Negros*. (emphasis added, 356v)

As Eden's comment indicates, *Negro* gradually replaces *Ethiope* in the popular speech at that time. In literature, geography, anthropology and other fields of 'learned discourse', however, the term *Ethiope* is still preserved. Thus, we find Richard Madox, crossing the Atlantic in 1582 and keeping his diary in Greek, Latin and cipher in order to disguise his notes, using the term *aethiops* (Latin entry, Dec 7th). In contrast, a less educated diarist on the same ship, John Walker, who writes in English, uses *Negro* throughout (Oct 1st, Dec 11th) (Donno 1976: 250, 319, 330). *Negro* is used throughout in the two accounts of John Hawkins' third slave trade voyage to Africa and the West Guineas reprinted in Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations* (III.501-21; 521-25). Shakespeare, in contrast, uses *Negro* but in a single instance (*MV* 3.5.32), his standard terms being Moor (in *Othello*) and *Ethiope* (in all other plays), a use which largely reflects the nature and language of his sources.

[2] On the rendering of Leo's and Ramusio's *uomini bianchi* into *tawny people* in by John Pory, see Barthélémy (1987:12-16).

Appendix 2: The Proverbial Ethiopian

The reference list below documents the making of the proverbial Ethiopian through the melting of two originally independent sources, a biblical one (Jer 13:23) and a secular one (Aesop), and visualises its continuity in Western writing and its prominence in Elizabethan thought. The passages listed also include references to Acts 8:27, the counter-image of the cleansed Ethiopian, which is often read as a direct response to Jer 13:23 (e.g. in Bede's *Acta Apostolorum*).

The first section lists the renderings of the proverb in its various European languages. Section two lists occurrences of the proverb in text and image, predominantly taken from the anglophone tradition. Unless further specified, references are made to book/act, chapter/scene, verse/line. In ambiguous cases, the entry specifies the version or edition used, as e.g. with *Gesta Romanorum* (Keller 1841), or lists the corresponding STC entry. Full references are provided in the bibliography. For the numerous passages in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, which have been expertly analysed by Carolyn Prager (1987), see her article for further detail.

1) Selected Languages

Greek	*Αιθίοπα σμηχειν* ('to rub an Ethiope white') (Delz 1995 "Mohr" 17)[3]
Latin	*Aethiopem lavare, dealbare* (Wander 1987 "Mohr" 20)
English	*Washing an Ethiope, a Blackamoor, a Moor, a Negro white* (OED online 2003)
German	*Mohrenwäsche* (Duden 1999: 2626)
French	*Blanchir un Maure, un Ethiopien* (Furetière 1727 :"Maure")
Italian	*Imbianchire un etiopo* (Pfister 1984: I.1196)
Spanish	*Jurado ha el vano de negro no hacer blanco* (Wander 1987 "Mohr" 18)
Dutch	*Het is dan murian geschuurd* (Wander 1867 „Mohr" 20)
Swedish	*Korpen blir ej hwitare, fastän man twåler honom* (Wander 1867 „Mohr" 18)
Russian	*'A moor remains a moor even if he mingles with whites'* (Wander 1987 "Mohr" 18)

2) Selected Passages (Apperson (1969), Blakely (1993), Dent (1981), Delz (1995), Duden (1999), Jeffrey (1992), *MED* (1954-99), Mieder (1992), *OED* (1989), Otto (1890), Prager (1987), Röhrich (1973), Schmidt (1982-86), Stevenson (1967), Taylor and Whiting (1958), Thompson (1989), Tilley (1950), Walther (1963-67), Wander (1867-80), Whiting (1949-51), Whiting and Whiting (1968), Whiting (1977), Wilkinson (1993), Wilson and Wilson (1970)).

'Aesop'/Aphthonius[4] (Perry 1965:No. 393)
A man bought an Aethiopian, thinking that his colour was the result of the neglect of his former owner. He took him home and used all kinds of soap on him and tried all kinds of baths to clean him up. He couldn't change his colour, but he made him sick with all his efforts. [Nature remains as it used to be.][5]

[3] On the shift from 'rubbing' to 'washing' and its religious connotations, see pages …. .
[4] The fable is generally attributed to Aphtonius (early 4th c. AD) rather than to Aesop, whose authorship was already questioned in the Early Modern Period, e.g. by Martin Luther (…..:50.452: "Dass mans aber dem Esopo zuschreibet, ist meins achtens ein Geticht, und vielleicht nie kein Mensch auff Erden Esopus geheissen"). For an introduction to Greek fables and early imitators, see Perry (1952).
[5] The final conclusion is missing in Perry (1965), but included in Schnur's (1978) reprint of Halm (1863).

Jer 13:23
Wyclif
Yf a man of Ethiopie mai chaunge his skyn, ether a pard mai chaunge his dyversitees, and ye moun do wel, whanne ye han lerned yvel.

Geneva Bible
[page header: "Ieemiah. The blacke More"]
Can the blacke More change his skin? Or the leopard his spottes? Then maie ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.

Authorised Version
[page header: "Custome in evill"]
Can the Ethiopian change his skinne? Or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also does good, that are accustomed*[6] to doe evill.

Acts 8:27-39 (Authorised Version)
27 And hee [Phillip] arose, and went: and behold, a man of Ethiopia, an Eunuch of great authority under Candace queene of the Ethipians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Hierusalem for to worship, 28 was returning, and sitting in his charet, read Esaias the Prophet. 29 Then the Spirit saide unto Philip, Goe neere, and ioyne thy selfe to this charet. 30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him reade the Prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?
31 And hee said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip, that hee would come up, and sit with him. 32 The place of the Scripture, which hee read, was this, ["]Hee was led as a sheepe to the slaughter, & like a Lambe dumbe before the shearer, so opened he not his mouth: 33 In his humiliation, his Iudgement was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? For his life is taken from the earth.["] 34 And the Eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the Prophet this? of himselfe, or of some other man?
35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Iesus. 36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certaine water: and the Eunuch said, See, here is water, what doeth hinder me to be baptized? 37 And Philip said, If thou beleevest wit hall thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered, and said, I beleeve that Iesus Christ is the Sonne of God. 38 And he commanded the charet to stand still: and they went downe both into the water, both Philip, and the Eunuch, and he baptized him. 39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the Eunuch saw him no more: and hee went on his way reioycing.

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Greek Anthology (Paton 1963:428)
Terence. *Phormio* 186
Lucian. *Adversus Indoctum* 28

Patristic Writing
Jerome. *Epistles* 69.6.7; 97.2.3; 108.11.1; *Adv. Ruf.* 3.23 (475 A); *Adv. Pelag.* 2.26 (565 B)
Gregory the Great. *Epistle* 3.67 (Migne …)

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Bede. *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum* (c. 725-31) 8.27-36
Godfrey of Winchester. *Epigrammata* (c. 1080-1100) 201
Fridankes Bescheidenheit (c. 1200) (Bezzenberger 1872:88.15-24)
Gesta Romanorum (14th c.) (Ed. Keller 1841) 5
Wyclif, John. (trans.) (c. 1395). *Jerome's Prefatory Epistles to the Bible* 7
Trevisa, John. (trans.) (1387). Higden. *Polychronicon* 6.2
Fabyan, Robert. *New Chronicles* (1516) 6.205

[6] [* = marginal gloss: "taught"]

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Brome. *The English Moor* (1636)
Berkeley. *The Lost Lady* (1638)

Shakespeare
R2 1.1.174
TMP 4.1.254-257

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Crashaw, Richard. *Steps to the Temple* (1646), *Divine Epigrams*, "Act 8"

Restoration Period and 18th century
Dryden, John. *The Hind and the Panther* (1687) (passim)
Wycherley, William. *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* (1673) 1.1.200
Barrow, Isaac. "The Danger and Mischief Delaying Repentance" (1671-77) *Sermon* 43
Bunyan, John. *Pilgrim's Progress* (1684) (Ed. Sharrock 1966), 2.377
Tryon, Thomas. *Friendly Advice to the Gentlemen-Planters* (1684) (Krise 1999:54)
Villiers, Duke of Buckingham [?], "Epistle to Mr Julian" (1688) line 64
Browne, Thomas. *Christian Morals* (1716) 2.6
Athenian Oracle 3rd ed. (1728), 1.386
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Southey, Robert. "Ode Written During the Negociations with Buonaparte" (1814) line 3
Scott, Sir Walter. *The Talisman* (1825) 926
Kipling, Rudyard. *Just So Stories* (1902) "How the Leopard Got His Spots"

17th to 19th century: American writing
Williams, Roger. *Complete Writings* (1652-76) 4.58, 5.425, 7.173
Mather. *Selected Letters* (Silverman 1971:Dec 13, 1707)
Sewall, Samuel. *Diary* July 22, 1716
Franklin, Benjamin. *Papers*. *Poor Richard Improved* (1749) 3.339-340; *Letter from James Parker* (1766) 13.327
Reid. *Colonial Virginia Satirist* "Religion of King William Country" (1769) Ch. 29
Lee, Richard Henry. *Letters*. "To Landon Carter" (April 1, 1776) (Ballagh 1911)
George Washington. *Letter to William McHenry, 30th Sept 1798* (Martin 2002:44)

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *Twice-Told Tales*. "Mr Higginbotham's Catastrophe" (1840) (Charvat et al. 1974:9.110)
Dickinson, Emily. *Poems*. "Civilization spurns the leopard" (1862) (Franklin 1998:276)
Emerson. *Works*. "Works and Days" (1870) (Emerson 1912:7.163)

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Hall, Prince. "A Charge to the African Lodge" June 24, 1797 (Ed. Parker) 71
Sidney, Joseph. "An Oration, Commemorative of the Abolition" January 2, 1809 (Ed. Parker) 362
Douglass, Frederick. *Life and Writings* (1881) (Foner 1950-55:4.347)

18th to 20th century: Visual Arts
[anon.] British 18th century caricature. (Walvin 1973: 179)
[anon.] Dutch 18th century sheet of popular sayings. (Blakely 1993: 145)
[anon.] Dutch 19th century joke. (Blakely 1993: 75)

[anon.] British 19th century soap advertisement. (Newman 1987: 141)
[anon.] Dutch soap advertisement (1910). (Blakely 1993: 169)

20th century: British writing

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20th century: American writing

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Appendix 3: Justifying physical coercion in Plutarch's Moralia

Plutarch and his *Moralia* were frequently read in the Renaissance. Four of Shakespeare's plays (*Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, *Timon of Athens*) are based on North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives* (1579) (Dillon 1980:325), Philip Sidney's *Apologie of Poetrie* (1595) was influenced by the Preface to the *Moralia* (Miller 1987:259), and very recently it has also been claimed that some passages in *Othello* were inspired by one of the dialogues from the *Moralia* (Evans 2001). Plutarch's dialogues would have been readily available at the time these texts were written, especially from the incipient 17th century onwards thanks to the English translation by Philemon Holland (1601). The dialogue *On the delays of divine vengeance*, translated under the title *How it commeth that the divine iustice deferreth other-whiles the punishment of wicked persons*, has enjoyed great popularity since the early modern period on account of its presumed affinities to Christian thought.[8] The dialogue was regularly used in sermons, as for example by the late 17th century Anglican clergyman Isaac Barrow,[9] and the Renaissance translator Philemon Holland explicitly praised it for "stopp[ing] the mouthes" of agnostics (1603:538). Even though Plutarch by no means espouses a Christian perspective, some parts of his *Moralia* could be (and were) mistaken for expressing a pseudo-Christian spirit by a Renaissance public.[10]

The main subject of debate in the first part of the dialogue (or the *logos*) is the question of whether children may be punished for their parents' transgressions. At the outset, three interlocutors raise several objections against such a notion, which they regard as misguided, counterproductive, unprofitable on various accounts (1603:540[549B-D]). The narrator protests, and starts disproving his opponents' objections one by one. His main argument is that evil deeds usually stem from a wicked disposition which is ingrained and comparable to a disease passed down from one generation to the next. Thus, in order to curb the dissemination of evil, its seeds must be contained before they "grow forward to any greatnesse" (1603:554 [561E]). To prevent an inherited disease from maturing, the narrator suggests a rigorous regime, consisting of a specific diet, medicine and physical exercise, especially for "the children of those who are subject to the falling sicknesse, to madnesse, phrenesie [i.e. melancholy] and the gout" (1603:554 [561F]). If such measures successfully prevent the eruption of congenital diseases, the narrator asks, why should not the self-same practice be applied for eradicating "hereditarie vice, which beginneth to bud and sprout in a yoong man […]?" (1603:554 [561F]).

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[8] The Loeb editors De Lacy and Einarson consider it "perhaps the most admired of Plutarch's philosophical writings" in the 19th and early 20th century (1959:170).

[9] See Barrow's sermon bearing the same name, i.e. *The Danger and Mischief of Delaying Repentance* (1670) (Napier 1859:Sermon 43).

[10] See for example the one passage in the so-called *mythos*, in which Thespesius' soul is resurrected on the third (!) day after death, and is shown the punishing of impure souls in a Dantesque purgatory (1603:556 [563E-567E]).

To justify the 'cure' of such inherited evil, the narrator employs a wide range of symbols of bestiality and lust to strengthen his case. In contrast to "yong whelps of beares, wolves, apes & such like creatures", which display their "naturall inclination" from the moment they are born, humans are far more skilful at disguising their evil dispositions: "The nature of man […] concealeth often times the ill that it hath, [and] doth imitate & counterfeit that which is good and honest" (1603:554-55 [562B]). According to the narrator, it is during this 'incubation period' that evil breeds, for, just as scorpions have their poisonous tail fully developed before bestowing "the first pricke", so too a wicked person will have premediated his crime before enacting the deed (1603:555 [562C]. Preemptive strikes are therefore necessary to curb a 'bestial' disposition, and particularly to prevent sexual misdeeds. Such precautions, the narrator claims, are constantly enforced behind the scenes by a god-like force which incessantly "riddeth [adulterers] of their vice, and preventeth in them (as it were) the falling sicknesse [i.e. epilepsy] before the fit surprise them" (1603:555 [562D]).

In order to explain the transmission of such vice from one generation to the next, Plutarch's narrator compares it to the physiological transmission of the two major Western symbolic representations of evil, that is, spotted skin and 'black' skin:

> [D]ivine justice is wont to persecute and punish that which resembleth vice and sinne: for like as the werts, blacke moales, spots and freckles of fathers, not appearing at all upon their owne childrens skinne, begin afterwards to put foorth and shew themselves in their nephews, to wit, the children of their sonnes and daughters: And there was a *Grecian* woman, who having brought foorth a blacke infant, and being troubled therefore, and judicially accused for adultrie, as if shee had beene conceived by a blacke-moore, shee pleaded and was found to have beene herselfe desceded from an Aethiopian, in the fourth degree remooved (1603:555 [563A])

By associating "vice and sinne" with "werts, blacke moales, spots and freckles of fathers" and with dark skin colour transmitted via sexual acts of adulterous Greek women, Plutarch's narrator represents evil by the same symbolic markers which prevail in medieval and Renaissance culture, that is, the black/white dichotomy and spots. However, these moles and freckles are not only said to correspond to inherited conditions, but also to vices accumulated in the course of a wicked life. In the *mythos* following the *logos*, Thespesius descends into the realm of tormented souls, and is shown a whole assembly of human spirits coloured in a variety of ways:

> [S]ome yeelded from them pure colour, uniforme and equall, as doth the full moone when she is at the cleerest; others had (as it were) scales or cicatrices, dispersed here and there by certeine distant spaces betweene; some againe, were wonderfull hideous and strange to see unto, all to be specked with blacke spots, like to serpents skinnes; and others had light scarifications and obscure risings upon their visage. (1603:557 [564D-E])

These spots and physical marks, literal imprints of former sins, all have to be removed in an excruciating process of chastising, during which parents and children are compelled to witness each others' suffering to augment their torment (1603:558 [565B]). The same procedure applies to skin colours, signs of "intemperance and loosenesse in the use of pleasures", which must be "scowred off" bit by bit on a divine behest (1603:558 [565C]).

Early Modern Period: Dictionaries
Erasmus, Desiderius . *Adagia* (1500) 1.4.50
Erasmus, Desiderius. *Adagia.* Trans. Raban, Edward (1622) 1.10 [7]
Franck, Sebastian. *Sprichwörter* (1541) 1.27r, 1.28v, 2.59v
Eliot, Thomas. *Bibliotheca Eliotae* (1542, 1548, 1552) „Aethiopem lavas"
Baret, John. *Alvearie or Quadruple Dictionarie* (1580) "Aethiopem lavas"

Early Modern Period: Theological Writing
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Luther, Martin. On *Psalm* 118 (1545), *Werke* 40.70
Becon, Thomas. *News out of Heaven* (1543) (*Works*, Ed. Ayre 1843), pp. 48-49
Bale, John. *The Examinations of Anne Askewe* (1546) (*Selected Works* Ed. Christmas 1849), 1.177
Gifford, George. *Briefe discourse* (1582) 83
Worship, William. *The Christians' mourning garment* (1612) STC 35
White, Francis. *A Replie to Jesuit Fisher's Answere* (1624) 22.573

Early Modern Period: Visual Arts
Alciato, Andrea. *Emblematum liber* (Augsburg 1531) E3
---. (Paris 1539) 182-183
---. (Paris 1542) 188-189
---. (Lyons 1548) 98
---. (Lyons 1550) 67
---. (Lyons 1564) 67
Palmer, Thomas. *Two Hundred Poosees* (1565), 52
Whitney, Geoffrey. *A Choice of Emblemes* (1586), 57
Rembrandt. *Baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch* (1626) (Blakely 1993:Fig.30, Erickson 2002b:Fig.13)

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Rabelais, François. *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1562) 5.21
Lyly, John. *Euphues* (1578) 1.191
Howell, John. *Devises* (1581) "All of Greene Lawrel" 13
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The Stonyhurst Pageants (c.1610-25) 496 (Whiting 1938: 41)
Purchas, Samuel. *Purchas His Pilgrimes* (1625). 4.9.1755 [marginal note]

Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama (for references and discussion, see Prager (1987))
Greene. *James IV* (c. 1591)
Kyd. *1 Jeronimo* (c. 1592)
Dekker. *Lust's Dominion* (c. 1600)
Marston. *Malcontent* (1604)
[anon.] *King* Leir (c. 1605)
Dekker. *2 Honest Whore* (c. 1605)
Jonson. *Masque of Blacknesse* (1605)
Jonson. *Masque of Beautie* (1608)
Webster. *The White Devil* (c.1609-12)
Dekker. *Roaring Girl* (c.1610)
Fletcher. *Woman's Prize* (1611)
Smith. *Hector of Germanie* (1613)
Fletcher. *Knight of Malta* (1616-18)
Rowley. *All's Lost by Lust* (1619-20)
Fletcher. *False One* (1620)

[7] The proverb is missing in the earlier translations of the *Adagia* listed as STC 10437-41.

As with the unchangeable Ethiopian, such an undertaking is believed to be mostly ‘labour in vain’, and if such a ‘cure’ succeeds, it is only because the pain inflicted upon the bestial, sick, or perverted transgressor has been excruciating enough to break his will. Paradoxically, then, the sole solution for ‘curing’ those pathologised by Plutarch’s narrator’s metaphors of illness consists in actually torturing and physically deforming them. Furthermore – and there lies the true significance of the narrator’s argument for the present discussion – such a ‘cure’ may not only be inflicted on hardened sinners, but also on those *merely suspected* of having inherited an evil disposition from their ancestors. Following Plutarch’s logic, then, it would be perfectly legitimate to chastise (and thereby ‘cure’) Canaan on the grounds that he must have inherited his wicked disposition from Ham.

Curriculum Vitae (updated 12.10.2008)

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